

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

PROJECT PROFILE

Wenger®
Your Performance Partner



TRANSFORM™ ACOUSTICAL BANNERS, NOTA® CHAIRS AND CLASSIC 50® MUSIC STANDS

“I’m proud to give tours and show our space to the public. We truly have a first-class environment.”

– Kevin Dobreff
Program Director, Music
Grand Rapids Community College



SOUNDLOK® SOUND-ISOLATION ROOMS



ULTRASTOR™ STORAGE CABINETS

CHALLENGE

Correct severe challenges with acoustics and acoustical flexibility in an outdated recital hall, and furnish newly renovated spaces with sound isolation practice rooms and storage.

WENGER SOLUTION

Install motorized acoustical banners that can quickly raise, lower or tuck away for customized acoustical treatment. Provide sound isolation practice rooms to contain loud-instrument noise, and install cabinet and shelf storage for sheet music and instruments, respectively.

BENEFITS

- Vastly improved acoustics
- Maximize space: retractable banners store quickly
- Organized storage for music and instruments
- Custom acoustics: raise or lower in single touch
- Improved environment due to sound isolation rooms

HIGHLIGHTS

Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) is an urban campus surrounded by the sounds of an active city. Some may find that noise invigorating. Not so if you're one of 150 music majors competing with fluttering helicopters and wailing sirens.

That is precisely what students and staff in GRCC's Music Center – specifically, its Linn Maxwell Keller Recital Hall – faced daily, prior to a massive, year-long renovation of the Center completed in the summer of 2017.

Today, the Albert P. Smith Music Center (known as “The Smitty”) is tailored to meet the needs of a diverse student body, which currently spans ages 14 to 75. The new Smitty features a refreshed recital hall entirely remodeled and outfitted to correct “the worst possible acoustical environment,” according to Kevin Dobreff, head of GRCC's music department.

To fully appreciate GRCC's new space, it's important to know the backstory.

A Gymnasium by Design

The original cavernous building was erected in 1922 as a physical education building for Strong Junior High School. Eventually, GRCC took over the facility and used it as a field house until 1978. In 1980, after a big remodel, GRCC reopened the building as the Music Center. A recording studio was added in 2000.

But the Center's recital hall had undergone no modifications since 1980, despite huge acoustical challenges that had never been addressed. Dobreff described how the windowed room was bombarded by outside noise from city streets and the adjacent hospital's Life Flight helicopter. Faded, old drapery did little to muffle the sounds.

In addition, the previous 1980 renovation had put the HVAC system directly over the recital hall. The roof also leaked and amplified rain noise. Though GRCC uses the off-campus St. Cecilia Music Center for auditorium space, the recital hall's severe shortcomings were incredibly problematic.

“Our acoustics were hindering recruitment tours, especially with prospective students coming from suburban high schools that had professional performance spaces,” Dobreff explained. “Our music program has an extremely high reputation, but our facility did not.”

For existing students, digital enhancement simply could not filter out all of the unwanted noise on recordings. Beyond acoustics, the Music Center also needed essentials, from a sprinkler system to sound-isolation practice rooms and instrument storage.

The Renovation

GRCC is the only community college in Michigan accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. Clearly, it was time to gut the building, rework the floor plan, and correct the acoustics.

“Acoustical modifications were our primary reason for the renovation. We had to solve the sound transfer issues from floor-to-floor and room-to-room,” Dobreff said. Though the new, angled wood walls with interwoven protrusions and shapes helped, construction alone could not fix the recital hall's acoustical challenges, nor could it provide acoustical flexibility for various uses.

The architect invited Justin Meyer, a senior acoustical consultant with Grand-Rapids-based Acoustics by Design, to join the team.

“The renovated recital hall changed shape and volume significantly, which required a total evaluation. Additionally, the functionality of the space was challenging,” Meyer explained. The recital hall does double duty as a daily rehearsal space and performance venue. It also must house 104 retractable seats when they're not in use.

According to Meyer, providing a space with good acoustical reflections, as well as thoughtful placement of acoustical absorption and the use of variable acoustics, was critical for the balance and variability of the reverberation within the hall.

The Results

Dobreff said GRCC is now proud to give tours and show its programs to the public. He's especially fond of the variable acoustical treatment that elevates performances and acts as a teaching tool.

“The banners' variability allows our performers to choose the acoustic environment that best suits the music being performed. It also lets our recording technology students adapt to different acoustic spaces.”

Overall, the banners play a big role in creating what Dobreff has always wanted for GRCC music students and staff. “We truly have a first-class acoustic space.”



TRANSFORM™ ACOUSTIC BANNERS



GEARBOSS® SHELVING

PRODUCT LIST

Transform™ Motorized Acoustical Banners, SoundLok® Sound-Isolation Rooms, UltraStor® Storage Cabinets, Wenger Music Library Systems, Gearboss® Shelving



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