

KINDER HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS HOUSTON, TEXAS

PROJECT PROFILE

Wenger®
CORPORATION



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“We didn’t just build a state-of-the-art school. We built a performing arts complex that will impact future artists for generations to come.”

– Jim Stevenson, McCarthy Building Companies, Houston Division President



CHALLENGE

The original facility, developed in 1971, was outdated and could no longer accommodate the growing student population at HSPVA. Known as one of the nation’s most prestigious performance schools, HSPVA needed to create a facility that could provide the proper education and performance spaces to continue to ignite passion in performance for the students, staff, and faculty.

WENGER SOLUTION

Build a new campus outfitted with integrated lighting, acoustical, rigging and other technological upgrades in the performing arts theatre, black box theatre, dance studio, recording studio, recital hall, rehearsal rooms, and education spaces to continue to help students flourish.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA) in Houston, Texas, is one of the top-ranked performing arts schools in the country, whose mission is to provide a balanced program of challenging academics and rigorous training in the arts. The school focuses on six art areas: vocal music, instrumental music, dance, theatre, visual art, and creative writing. Kinder HSPVA houses roughly 750 students and is alma mater to many Grammy-winning musicians, Emmy-winning actors, successful journalists, and famous performers. The school has one of the highest numbers of Presidential Scholars in the Arts in the nation.

HSPVA was originally built in 1971 and had experienced piecemeal renovations as the school aged. It was bursting at the seams with more students across the country interested in attending. After an extensive search for a new facility, school administration decided to open a new location in downtown Houston and design a building to meet the growing needs of the school.

Part of the plan included first-class music education, acoustic, staging, lighting, and rigging equipment for the many performing arts spaces within the school.

"This is specifically a performing arts high school, so they knew they wanted quality equipment," says Toby Smith, Wenger Corporation Business Development Manager. "They understand Wenger Corporation and the reputation of quality and safety associated with the Wenger and J.R. Clancy brands, and with a school so highly focused on performance, it was important to get it right."

Building The Team

Located in the middle of downtown Houston, the site space was tight and had little to no available storage capacity around the building so deliveries required pinpoint scheduling. In addition to those challenges, the design included numerous floor plan finishes and coordination of specialty subcontractors on the job site. Integrating the theatre equipment, acoustical materials, rigging, theatrical lighting, audio/visual, and fiber connections, catwalks, and other specifics into the structure is not common for typical commercial construction.

Spearheaded by the Houston Independent School District Construction Services department, the design team included Gensler and HarrisonKornberg Architects as well as McCarthy Building Companies, who worked directly with Wrightson, and Johnson, Haddon & Williams, Inc. Theatre Consultants (WJHW), primary structural engineer Cardno Haynes Whaley, primary mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering consultant Shah Smith and Associates, and several associate consultants.

Chris Purpura from WJHW was the lead theatre consultant and determined what equipment would best suit the school's many needs.

"There were a lot of complicated parts and pieces," explains Purpura. "We had acoustical curtains, house lighting, motor-

ized and manual rigging – and all of it had to be delivered and installed into one city block in downtown Houston. There were multiple venues so communicating well and often with Wenger Corporation was essential. It was a challenging, but fun project."

Purpura determined that Wenger Corporation could provide a one-stop integrated solution for Kinder HSPVA, while providing project management to help keep the new building and equipment installation on schedule.

"I think Wenger is the only name that most music educators know when thinking about music education equipment," says Brad Smith, Director of Orchestral Activities and String Chamber Music.

Updated and Integrated Technology

A project of this scope, size and complexity takes time.

The \$88 million project would ultimately feature specialized performance and fine arts spaces to enhance the artistic environment of the school. Architects drew the plans for a five-story, 168,000-square-foot building featuring a dramatic front entrance with double-high glass windows and a wide stairwell, 800-seat main theater with a balcony, dance and music studios, 150-seat recital hall, 200-seat theater, 190-seat black box theater, rehearsal rooms, modern outdoor dining area, two levels of underground parking and an outdoor roof terrace.

Construction began in February of 2016 and lasted two and a half years. During that time, technology changed and Wenger Corporation, known for acoustical and rigging equipment, added lighting integration system solutions to its breadth of product offerings. Kinder HSPVA was the beneficiary of this addition.

"We provided all entertainment lighting fixtures, networking, distribution, and lighting controls for the Denney Theatre, Dance Studio, Studio Theatre, Recital Hall, Black Box and Light Lab," explains Ryan Cole, Wenger Corporation Project Manager.

The theatre's lighting needs were originally designed around standard incandescent fixtures. However, the designers knew LED technology was improving and could be a viable option for the future, so they selected "switchable" dimmer modules that allowed using either a standard or LED fixture.

"We wanted what was best for Kinder HSPVA, including the newest and latest technology for lighting," adds Cole.

The integration of the lighting solutions across the building would provide Kinder HSPVA with ease of control and serviceability. Wenger Corporation also managed the integration of the multi-faceted project including the lighting elements, acoustical shell, automated and counterweight rigging solutions, motion control solutions, portable audience seating, staging, and music rehearsal equipment.

"The integration provides continuity among the spaces for anyone using the equipment, as well as a single point of contact for any service questions," says Cole.

Denney Theatre

The heart and soul of the building is the 800-seat Denney Theatre, which is utilized for a variety of performance types ranging from orchestra and choral to dance, theatre, and lectures. To enhance the sound quality and ability to cater to these performers, teams installed a variety of Wenger and J.R. Clancy equipment, including:

- A custom lighting integration system, including LED theatrical lighting, networking, distribution, and theatrical and architectural lighting controls with customizable settings.
- A Diva® Acoustical Shell to improve the sound for audiences as well as performers on stage.
- A SceneControl™ Motion Control System, with the ability to program a number of shows, no matter how complex. Multi-level cueing, grouping, and control of an unlimited number of axes per cue make this console perfect for Kinder HSPVA, which presents a wide repertoire in a single season.
- A cost-effective counterweight rigging system.
- PowerLift® Hoists that are accompanied by additional custom automated rigging solutions.
- Signature® Choral Risers and conductor's equipment that are lightweight and provide ease of mobility for flexible set-ups.
- Stagetek® Risers and conductor's equipment.

The J.R. Clancy rigging equipment and motion control systems are specifically designed for maximum safety and ease of use, a benefit for the technical staff, teachers, and students using the equipment.

"Students are getting great experience working with this cutting-edge equipment," explains Paul Davis, Costume Design Manager.

Black Box Theatre

In the Black Box Theatre, Wenger's portable audience seating and StageTek® risers provide flexible configurations for the theatre's many needs. They're lightweight, strong, and easy and quick to set up or move. Lighting integration, distribution and lighting controls, as well as a Tension Grid, curtains, and tracks round out the technology.

One of the main benefits of a Black Box Theatre is its versatility. The simplicity of the space is used to create a flexible stage and audience interaction. The use of staging and lighting in Black Box Theatres can range from extremely minimal to very elaborate, depending on the performance. Wenger's solutions in this space allow for a variety of staging and lighting options.

Band, Orchestra, and Vocal Education and Rehearsal Spaces

For the band, orchestra, and vocal areas, Wenger installed 31 SoundLok® Practice Rooms with superior sound isolation, making each room 25 percent quieter than any other practice room available. The correct amount of absorption and diffusion is built-in so the musician can clearly hear the best possible sound. The rooms also have built-in virtual acoustic environment (VAE) technology, allowing the musician to learn how to adapt to performing in different performance spaces and get immediate feedback with record/playback during the practice session.

"Our students are really enjoying the new practice rooms and experimenting with the virtual acoustics," Brad Smith says. "We also like the fact that there are glass doors on them so we can see what's going on and potentially help them if they need assistance."

AcustiCabinets® and a String Bass Rack keep instruments well organized when not in use. And StageTek® portable stages and riser systems help them prepare for any number of rehearsal situations.

Time to Shine

With all of the new equipment successfully installed, it was time for the school to open its doors. Everybody raved.

"We didn't just build a state-of-the-art school. We built a performing arts complex that will impact future artists for generations to come," said Jim Stevenson, Houston division president of McCarthy Building Companies.

The new acoustical equipment was a big hit with the music department.

"During our first concert with the new acoustical shell, the choir members could hear each other much better, and the sound in the theatre was greatly enhanced by the shell," explains Pat Bonner, Choral Director. "Even in the mezzanine, the sound carried beautifully."

The equipment in the new facility is providing students, staff, and faculty the opportunity to improve their performances, continuing the school's long-standing tradition and nationwide acknowledgement of excellence.

"Kinder HSPVA is truly a school like no other," says Principal Scott Allen. "As I walk the hallways of the school and observe students studying and participating in the creative arts, I realize how fortunate they are to have a fine arts campus to attend in the Houston Independent School District."



PRODUCT LIST

Wenger: Diva® Acoustical Shell, Signature® Choral Risers, Flex Conductor's System, StageTek® Platforms, Portable Audience Seating, UltraStor® Instrument Storage Cabinets, Nota® ConBRIO® and Musician Posture Chairs, Roughneck™ Music Stands, Music Library, String Bass Rack, Tuba Storage Rack, SoundLok® Sound Isolation Rooms with VAE® Technology

J.R. Clancy: Lighting Integration - Entertainment Lighting, Networking, Distribution, and Theatrical and Architectural Lighting Controls, Curtain and Tracks, Pipe Grid, SceneControl™ Motion Control System, Counterweight Rigging System, PowerLift® Hoists, PowerLine™ Hoists for Orchestra Shell Ceilings, Motorized Lineshaft Hoist for Fire Curtain, Varion® Hoists, Tension Grid

ABOUT WENGER | J.R. CLANCY

Wenger and J.R. Clancy provide the widest array of innovative, high-quality products and services for the performing arts industry. Their advanced products provide the highest levels of safety, reliability and aesthetics, helping transform performance venues and engineer unforgettable experiences.



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MUSIC EDUCATION AND PERFORMING ARTS

Owatonna Office: Phone 800.4WENGER (493-6437) Worldwide +1.507.455.4100 | Parts & Service 800.887.7145 | wengercorp.com
555 Park Drive, PO Box 448 | Owatonna | MN 55060-0448

Syracuse Office: Phone 800.836.1885 Worldwide +1.315.451.3440 | jrclancy.com | 7041 Interstate Island Road | Syracuse | NY 13209-9713

ATHLETICS Phone 800.493.6437 | email gearboss@wengercorp.com | gearboss.com | 555 Park Drive, PO Box 448 | Owatonna | MN 55060-0448