



Pittsburgh Playhouse: Special Features

The new Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University, given its size, state-of-the-art features and Downtown location, is an interdisciplinary space that will act as the entertainment hub for the entire campus.

“At our Oakland facility, we were limited to being a producing house – everything offered was created at the Playhouse,” said Kim Martin, producing director. “At the new Playhouse, we are able to also be a presenting house, meaning we can bring in speakers, comedians, bands and more. It will be especially exciting to see the other schools take advantage of the space by scheduling and presenting their own lineups.”

In addition, the greater space and sound barriers will allow multiple stages and support spaces to run productions at the same time, something that could never be done at the Oakland facility.

Here are some more exciting features of the new Pittsburgh Playhouse:

- In addition to the theatres, stretches of hallways offer opportunities to display student achievements, the café can house art installations and historical displays, and rehearsal spaces can be home to public readings, exhibits and events.
- A typical theatre is symmetrical, meaning there is an even number of seats on both sides of mirroring aisles and balconies. The main theatre of the Playhouse is asymmetrical – it has more seats on one side and overhanging balcony on the other, along with seats on the floor and more balconies, which offer a greater feeling of intimacy. “It’s a warmer room, with pathways that intertwine,” Martin said. “Audiences are going to want to try different areas and will feel compelled to walk around. That’s just not done in a symmetrical house theatre.”
- The transformational Highmark Theatre is adaptable to any seating configuration, while the glass back wall opens to an outside, mini-amphitheater. This allows for unique event opportunities, such as outdoor seating for concerts, or indoor seating for an outdoor performance.
- The Rauh Theatre, the most intimate space, has the capacity to fly scenery – an option most black box theatres do not have. “I have a feeling this will be my favorite space,” Martin said.
- The old Pittsburgh Playhouse was a hemp house, one of the few surviving in the country – “for good reason,” Martin says. It’s an antiquated system where, when a piece of scenery or lighting is hung, that weight must be countered with sandbags, to allow the piece to fly. The new Playhouse has an arbor counterweight system. “We still counterweight the different lines with stage weights, but the system itself is far, far easier, quicker and more user-friendly. What use to take hours will take minutes,” she said.
- A 2,738-square-foot soundstage rising up three floors with a 15-foot-high catwalk and 24-foot-high ceilings will provide learning professional-level learning opportunities to Cinema Arts students in multiple disciplines, including cinematography, audio work, lighting work and aesthetics. While it primarily operates as a classroom and for student projects, professional

filmmakers will have the opportunity to make use of the space for projects and provide additional learning opportunities to Cinema Arts students.

- The breathtaking main lobby looks like an internal street. “The shafts of light -- the magnificence of it is something to behold,” Martin said. “Four stories of wide open space and light is stunning, but my favorite view of the lobby is its counterpart. Standing atop the very modern, grand staircase looking down to the main entrance on Forbes Avenue literally brought tears to my eyes the first time I saw it.”
- Tucked-in spaces along the grand staircase allow people to lounge while hanging out in the lobby.
- The indoor loading dock, located in the scene shop, will bring to an end the days of unloading wood steel in the snow and rain. The dock also will allow stage sets to be brought in fully completed, as opposed to the old Playhouse, where sets had to be built in small pieces so they could fit through the doors. The change provides the ability to stage more lavish productions.
- Large, open windows will allow students, faculty, staff and the public to have an intimate look at the inner workings of the Playhouse.