

2011 NOMINATION FORM

Ida Lee Willis Memorial Foundation Historic Preservation Awards Program

NOMINATIONS must be postmarked or received in the Kentucky Heritage Council office by **Monday, April 11**. Entries may also be submitted via email to kyheritage@ky.gov or by fax at 502-564-5820. For each entry, submit a completed nomination form, narrative description and supporting documentation to:

Kentucky Heritage Council / State Historic Preservation Office
300 Washington Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
ATTN: Ida Lee Willis Awards

1. Nominee

Name **Van Meter Hall Renovation – Western Kentucky University**
Title / Organization **Ms. Kerra Ogden – WKU Project Manager, Planning, Design & Construction; Dr. David Lee – Dean, Potter College of Arts & Letters / Western Kentucky University**
Mr. Jeff Stivers and Ms. Illona Beresford – RossTarrant Architects, Lexington KY
JMA, Louisville KY – consulting historic preservation architect
Address **1906 College Heights Blvd.**
City **Bowling Green** State **KY** Zip **42101**
Phone **Ms. Ogden: 270-745-2128** Email kerra.ogden@wku.edu
Dr. Lee: 270-745-5204 david.lee@wku.edu

2. Award

(check one)

Memorial Award Preservation Project Award Service to Preservation Award

3. Description

Include a brief narrative description of the project(s) the nominee has accomplished. Relate this description to the criteria for the appropriate award.

4. Supporting Documentation

Attach or enclose any photographs, articles, publications or letters of support for the nominee that would assist in the determining the impact of his/her contribution. Before and after photographs should be included for a Preservation Project Award. When submitting by mail, materials may also be submitted on a CD/DVD attached to the nomination form. When submitting via email, please submit all files in one email in PDF format; do not send multiple files. For questions, contact Diane Comer at 502-564-7005, ext. 120, or diane.comer@ky.gov.

5. Submitter of Nomination

Name **Charles Raith**
Title / Organization **Vice President / JMA [John Milner Associates, Inc.]**
Address **471 W Main St, Ste 200**
City **Louisville** State **KY** Zip **40202-2954**
Phone **(502) 587-8800** Email craith@johnmilnerassociates.com

3. Description

Historic Significance of the Building

Completed in 1911, Van Meter Hall was the first building constructed on the campus of Western Kentucky University and the work of Kentucky architect Brinton B. Davis. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of a historic district thematic nomination, designated in April 1979, for its association with the master plan developed by Davis and campus landscape architect Henry Wright constituting “one of the few instances in Kentucky in which the same architect worked on both the master plan of a college and a number of subsequent buildings on the campus.”

Commensurate with the building’s importance to the University, Van Meter Hall’s monumental temple front is visible at some distance away along the US 31W approach to the campus “acropolis” from the city below and commands a sweeping prospect of the surrounding countryside from the hilltop. Resting solidly on a high podium, the symmetrically arranged masonry structure is capped by a plain frieze with spare, yet highly decorative, details such as the antefixae on the corners of the roofline and the ridge-crest of the pediment, articulating pilasters, and the meander fretwork employed between string courses of the brickwork on the side elevations.

Wide exterior steps ascend to the Ionic octastyle portico, inviting a procession of visitors through one of three monumental doors. Inside, the grandeur and importance of the building is articulated in the lofty vaulted Lobby, with its double-height engaged columns, open second-story gallery, marble stairways and wainscot, and stained-glass lay-light in the ceiling. The Auditorium beyond—seating approximately 1,100 people—has an open second-story balcony and restrained classical details such as engaged pilasters and proscenium, dentil molding, symmetrically placed windows and doors which harmonize the interior with the exterior, and an arched coffered ceiling which unites the composition.

Impact on the Community

Rehabilitation of Van Meter Hall began in the Spring of 2008 and was completed in 2010 with the objective of providing a state-of-the-art performance venue capable of supporting musicals produced by the cooperative efforts of the Department of Theatre and Dance and the Department of Music. It is also home to the Bowling Green Western Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Kentucky, and the Cultural Enhancement Series.

The project included construction of a new stage house, orchestra pit, and backstage support facilities, including dressing rooms and a green room. Improvements included new theatrical lighting, acoustic upgrades, redesigned sightlines for balcony seating, an elevator and accessible restrooms, and restoration of the original chandeliers and historic interior finishes in the Lobby and Auditorium. Exterior brick masonry and stonework were repaired and cleaned, and the historic cast iron light fixtures at the front steps were restored.

The importance of Van Meter Hall as campus icon and anchor has been enhanced by its renewed purpose and new life, providing an outstanding acoustical environment for musical and theatrical performances.

Use of Innovative Restoration Techniques

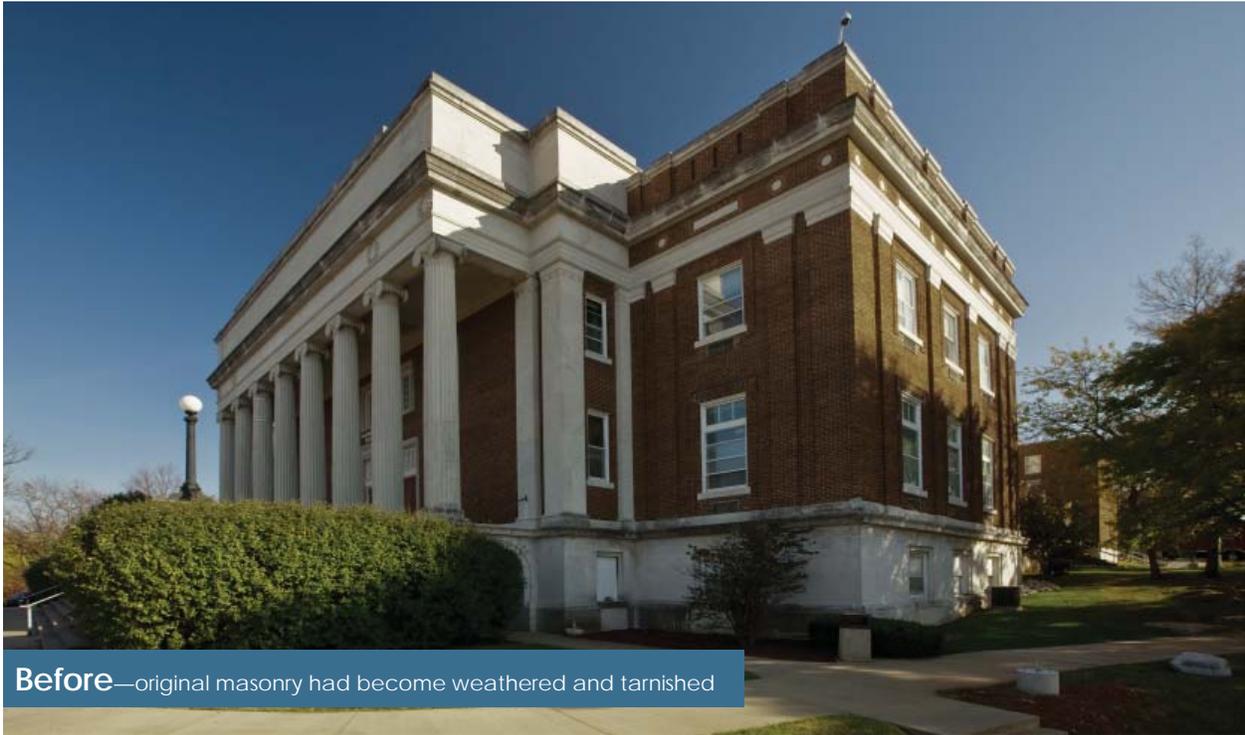
Originally designed only as a lecture hall, Van Meter Hall exemplifies rehabilitation as a means of compatible use in a historic property through carefully planned alterations and compatible additions. Significant historic features, materials, elements, and spatial relationships that convey historical, cultural, and architectural values have been preserved.

Ability of the Project to Serve as an Example for Other Historic Preservation Efforts

The project also illustrates “best practices” by the inclusion of a preservation professional on the project team and the completion of a thorough Building Assessment Report before the start of design. The report included a review of the building’s history and contributing features, a condition assessment with treatment recommendations, and analyses of historical finishes, material cleaning, and mortar composition. Preliminary archeological investigations were also conducted on a Civil War fortification adjacent to the construction site.

Images

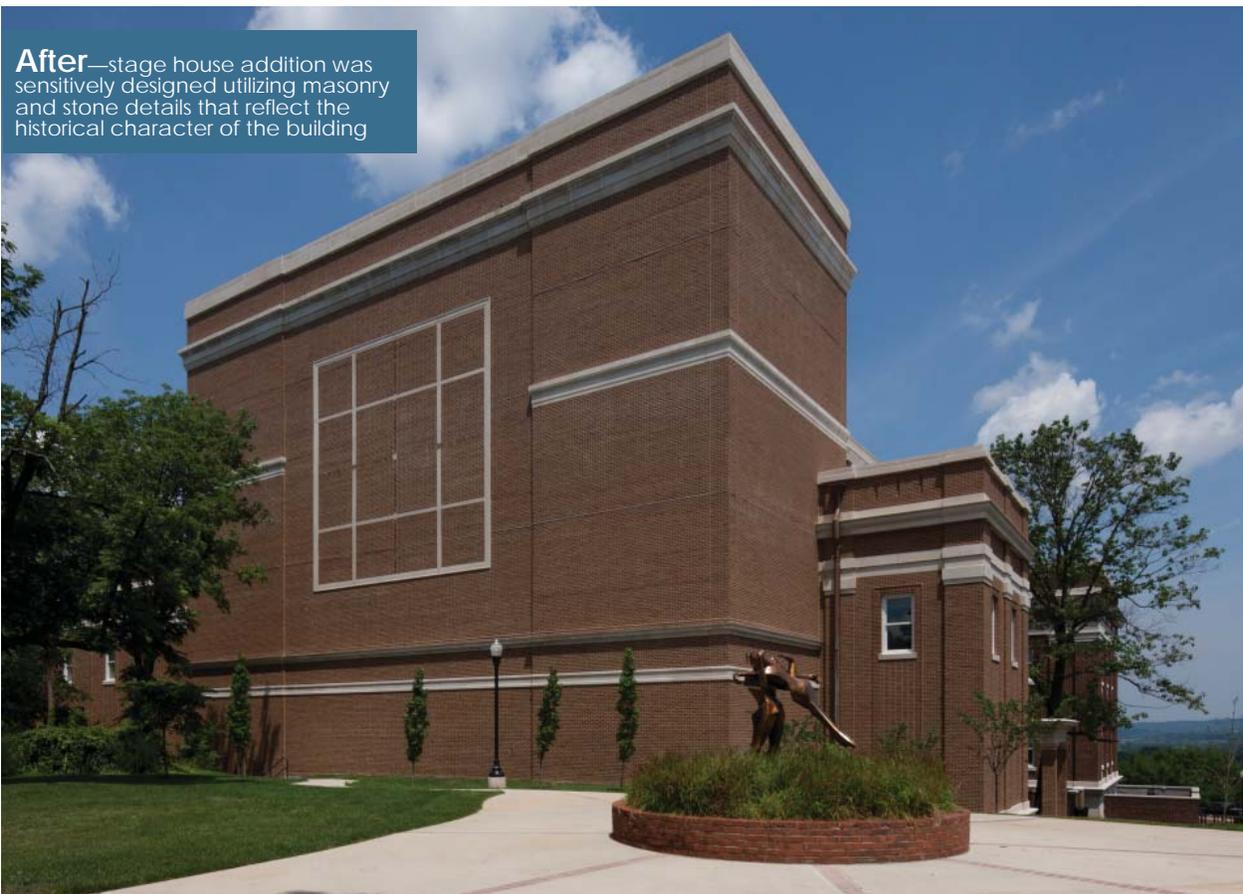


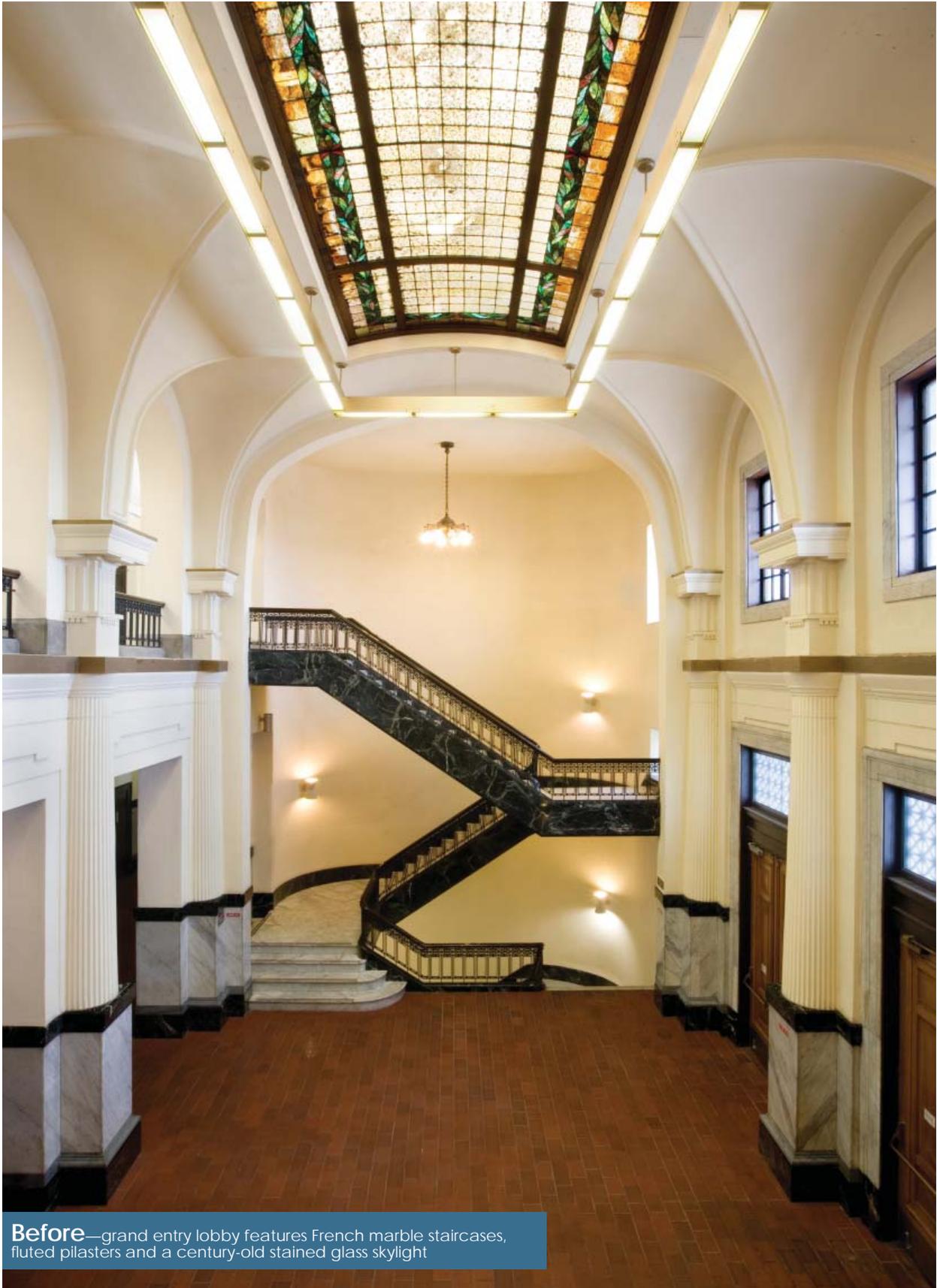


Before—rear of building



After—stage house addition was sensitively designed utilizing masonry and stone details that reflect the historical character of the building

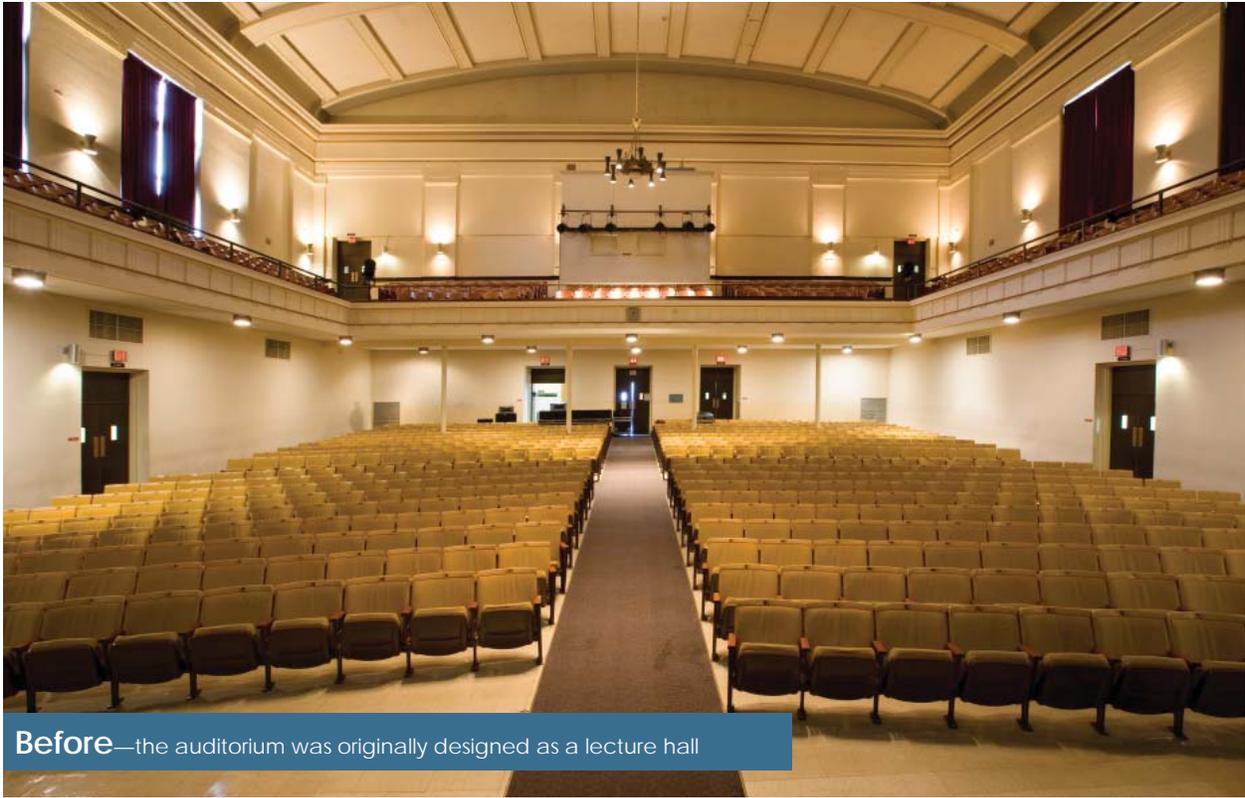




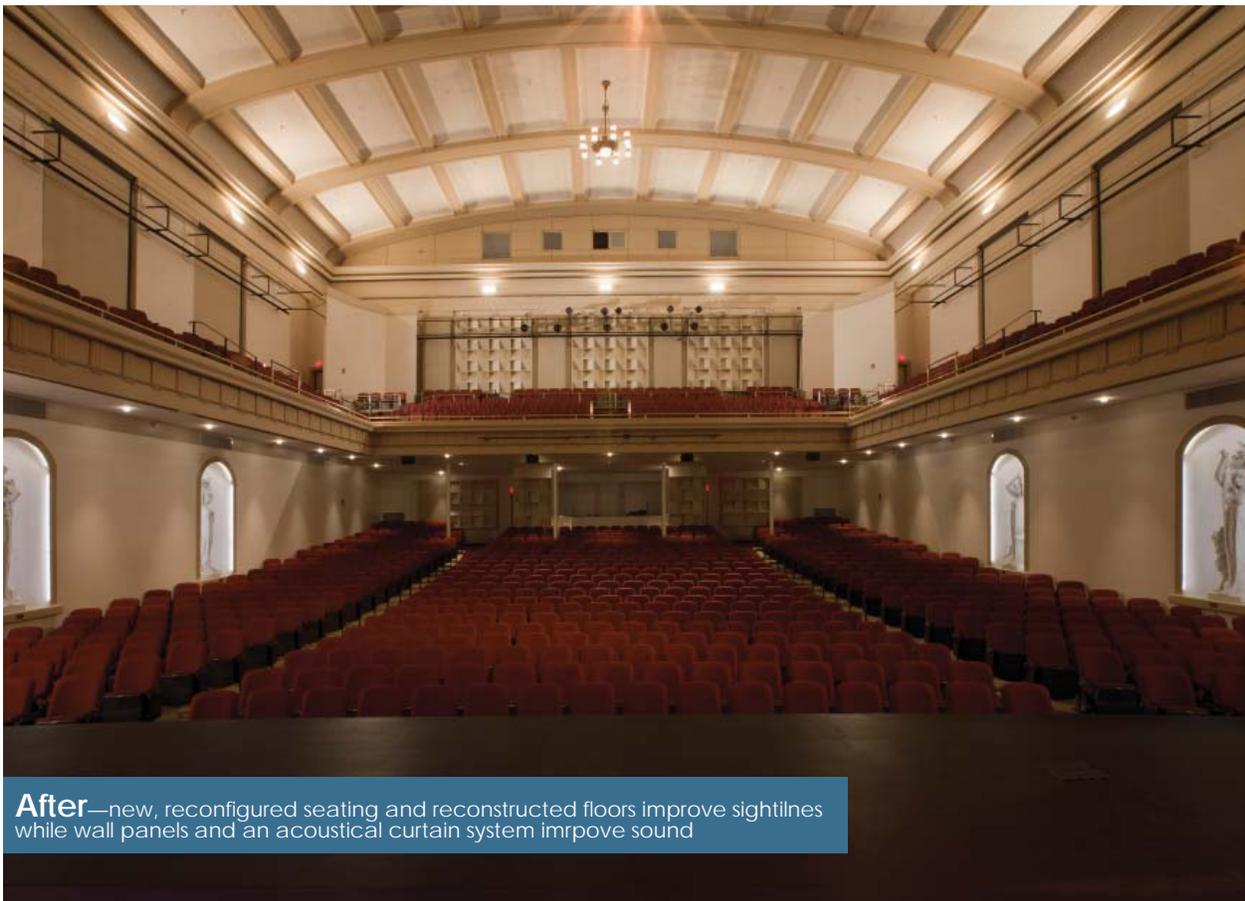
Before—grand entry lobby features French marble staircases, fluted pilasters and a century-old stained glass skylight



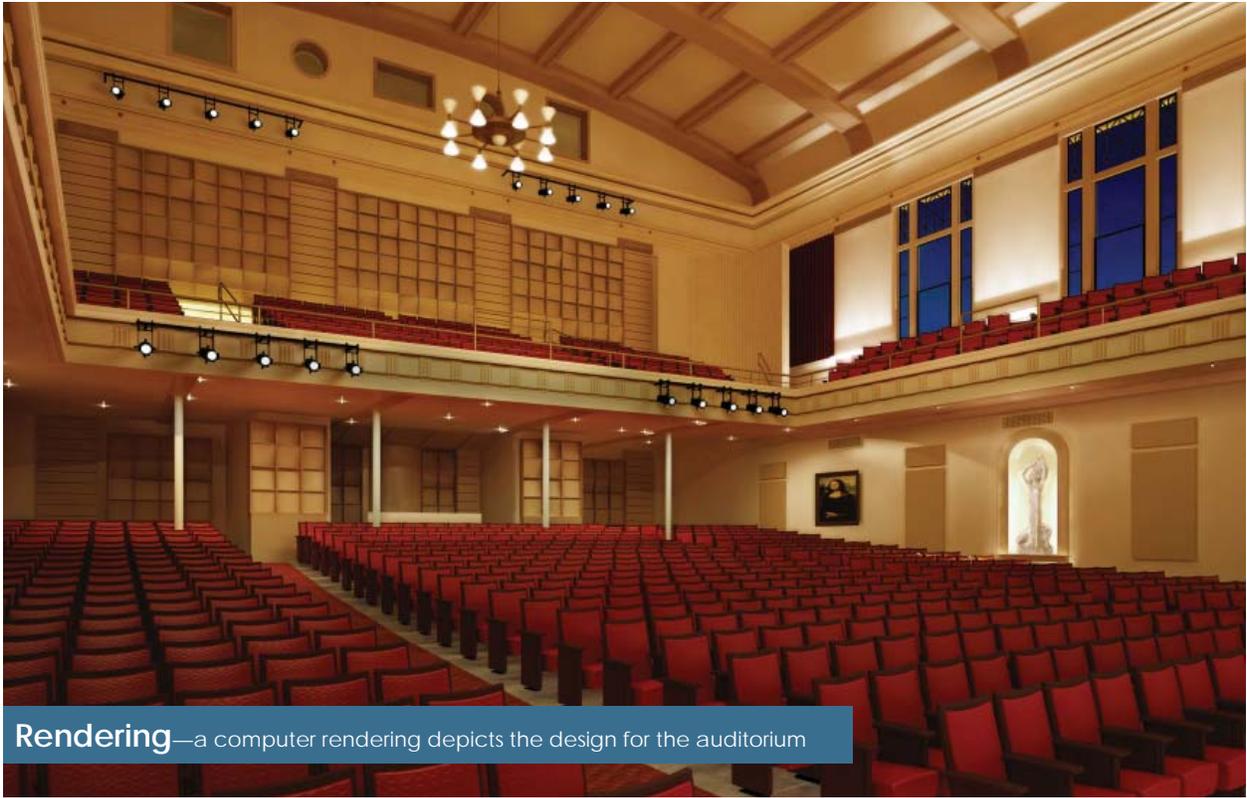
After—railings are redesigned to increase their height, and all finishes and the historic glass skylight are fully restored



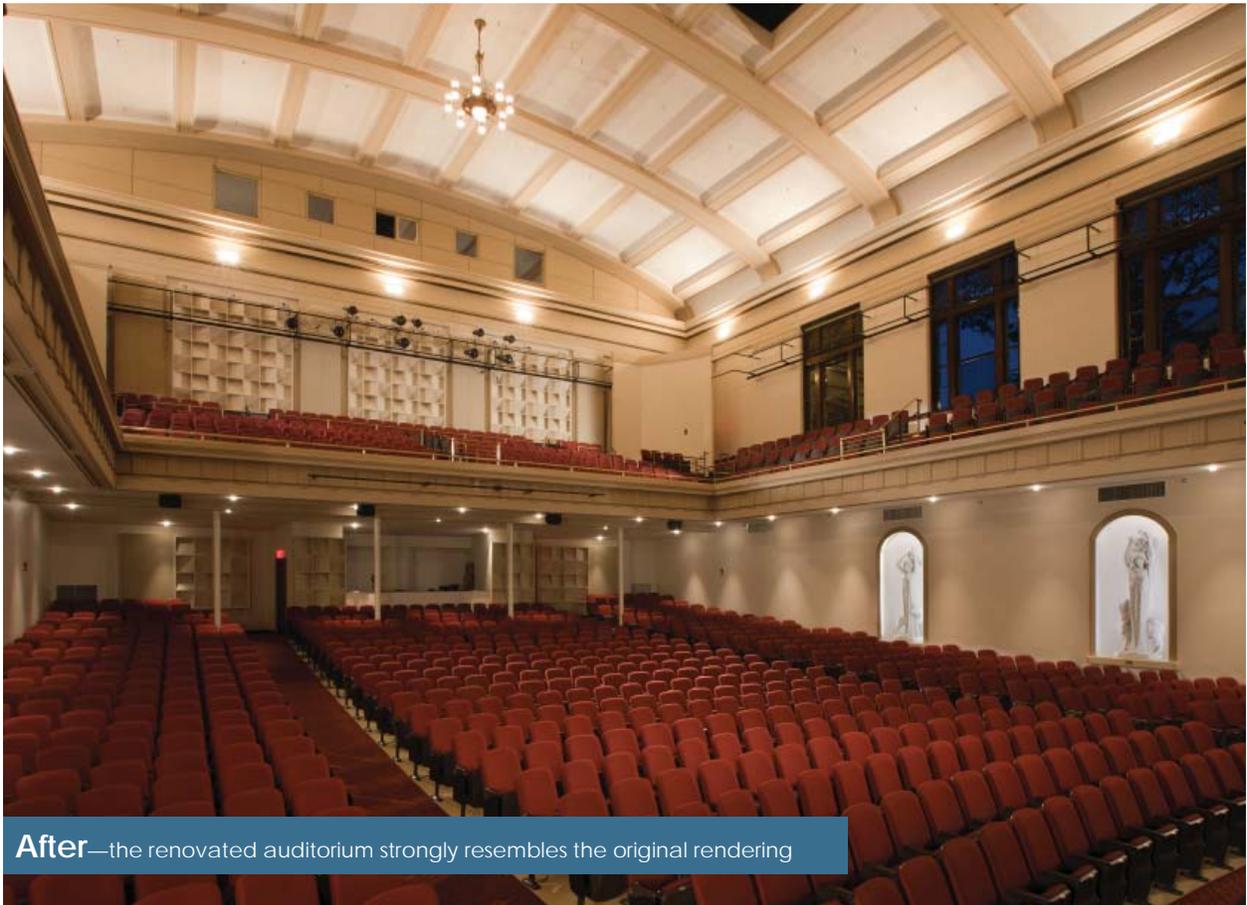
Before—the auditorium was originally designed as a lecture hall



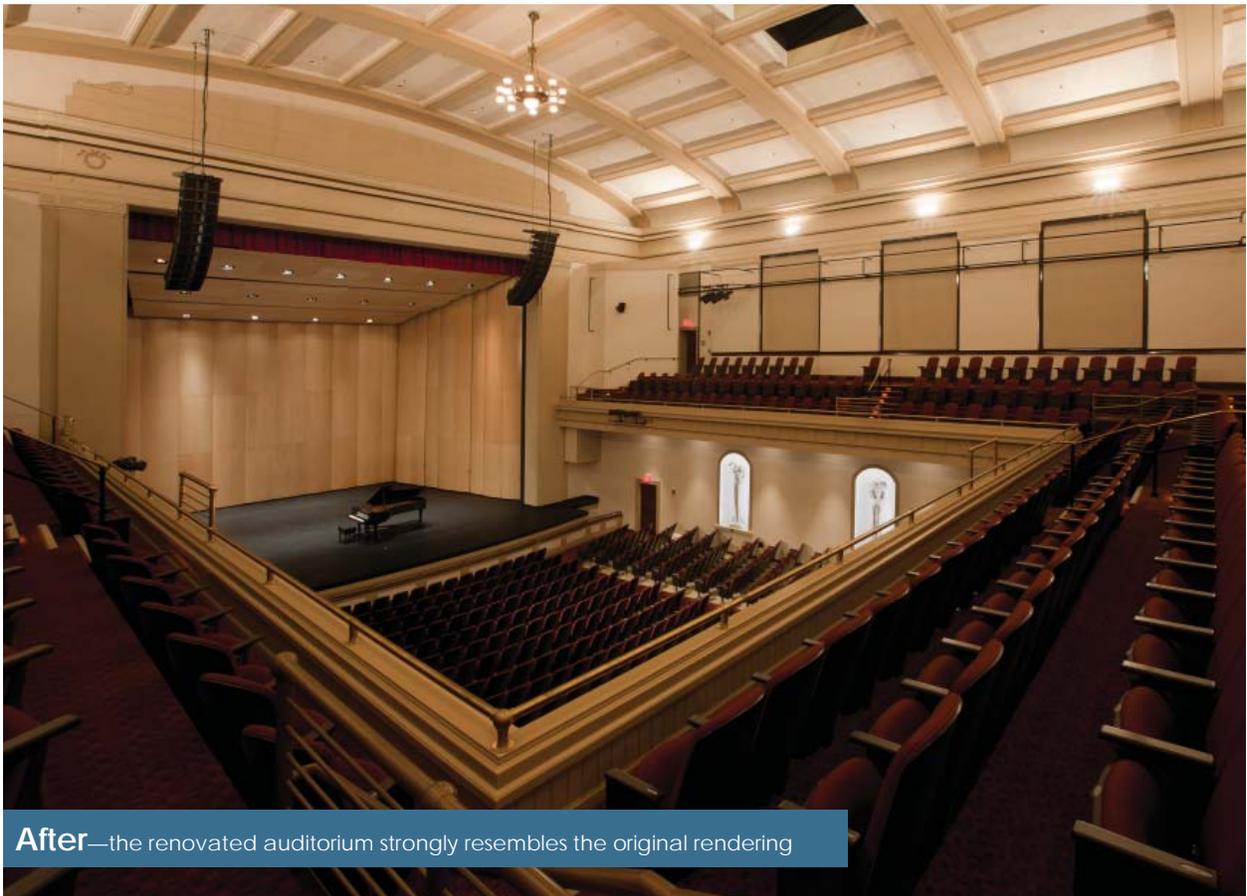
After—new, reconfigured seating and reconstructed floors improve sightlines while wall panels and an acoustical curtain system improve sound



Rendering—a computer rendering depicts the design for the auditorium



After—the renovated auditorium strongly resembles the original rendering





After—renovated auditorium showing custom orchestra shell on stage and reconfigured seating