

OBERLIN

COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

Office of Conservatory Communications

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Oberlin Receives Largest Gift Ever for the Support of Jazz Education

Editors Please Note: Effective April 22, 2010, the Litoff Building was renamed. Oberlin's new home for jazz studies, music history, and music theory is now the Bertram and Judith Kohl Building.

OBERLIN, OHIO (December 9, 2005) — Oberlin College President Nancy Dye has announced that Cleveland businessman Stewart Kohl and his wife, Donna, recently committed to facilitate the funding of a \$5 million gift to the College. Stewart, a 1977 graduate of Oberlin College, is a managing partner of The Riverside Company. Believed to be the largest gift ever given specifically for the support of jazz education at a college in the United States, it will enable Oberlin to construct a new facility for the Jazz Studies Program.

“Stewart and Donna’s tremendously generous commitment is a testament to their steadfast belief in the collaborative value of higher education and the arts,” President Dye said. “On behalf of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni, I am honored to thank them for their support.”

Dean of the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music David Stull said the gift will be a transformative event for Oberlin College. “The Jazz Studies Program, under the visionary leadership of Professor Wendell Logan, has long been a flagship department of the highest caliber in desperate need of adequate space,” Stull said. “Stewart and Donna, through their remarkable generosity, have not only launched a project to address this need, but have also invested in the education of future generations of students at Oberlin.”

“I believe history is shaped by a confluence of events and that there are important moments along the way,” Stewart Kohl said. “This is one of them for Oberlin College.”

“Oberlin College has great leadership,” Kohl said, in explaining the various reasons for his and Donna’s commitment to the College. “With Robert Lemle as our new Board Chair, Nancy Dye as our inspiring and proven President, and David Stull as a young and bright light in the Conservatory we are exceedingly well run. With our new Strategic Plan, the institution has renewed its dedication to providing educational excellence and a total experience for its students that is unmatched.”

Kohl added, “While neither Donna nor I are musicians — as a student at Oberlin I rarely set foot in the Conservatory — we do enjoy music as patrons and believe in its powerful civilizing role. Since joining the Oberlin College Board of Trustees, I’ve come to appreciate the significance of the Conservatory. It is best in class – worldwide. And it is a distinguishing factor in and a major contributor to the Oberlin experience.”

“For this reason, the modernizing of the Conservatory has risen to become Oberlin’s number one capital priority since the building of its world class Science Center. And providing a proper home for the Jazz Studies Program within the Conservatory has become a top priority. Under the leadership of the renowned Wendell Logan, the jazz program is one of our most popular majors at Oberlin and contributes significantly to the

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richness and diversity of the Conservatory and the overall campus. Finally, jazz as an art form is a uniquely American gift to the world, of which we should be especially proud in these times when not all of America's gifts are so beloved.

"Donna and I believe that Oberlin has an important role to play in Northeast Ohio, America, and in fact the world. And to play its role, Oberlin needs a larger endowment and more support from its board and alumni. We are hopeful that this gift will inspire others to similarly reach in their giving and perhaps trigger the next capital campaign. In part for selfish reasons, we've come to see the wisdom of giving earlier in our lives. We expect to be kicking around for at least another fifty years and so we will be able to enjoy meeting and hearing the young musicians who will pass through this building. Hopefully we'll be able to follow their achievements and accomplishments through their careers. This was a strong motivation for our gift of the Neuroscience Teaching Laboratory (at Oberlin College) in honor of my parents.

"Finally, but most importantly, one of my closest friends is Mel Litoff. He and his wife, Phyllis, owned the Sweet Basil Jazz Club in Greenwich Village during its heyday as one of the world's most important jazz venues. They also were founders of the Greenwich Village Jazz Festival. Phyllis Litoff was an astute club owner, gifted musician, and loving mother, grandmother, and wife. In 2002 Phyllis died from brain cancer and the new building in Oberlin will be dedicated in her memory."

The Conservatory incorporated jazz into its curriculum in 1973 and began offering a major in Jazz Studies in 1989. The program prepares students for careers as professional jazz musicians and for advanced study in jazz. The Jazz Studies faculty includes composers and performers who maintain active jazz careers in addition to teaching lessons and classes and coaching ensembles.

Stewart Kohl and The Riverside Company founder Bela Szigethy '77 have been instrumental in the development of Oberlin's Business Scholars program. An innovative winter term program, it was specifically designed to give students the foundation of skills, knowledge, and contacts necessary to successfully compete for jobs and internships in finance and consulting. Pairing a comprehensive liberal arts education with focused practical experience is an unparalleled way to prepare students for the demands of the business world.

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