

OBERLIN

COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

Office of Conservatory Communications

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Kulas Foundation Awards \$750,000 Toward Oberlin's New Jazz Building; Cleveland Architectural Firm Hired

*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 (September 21, 2006)—The Oberlin Conservatory of Music at Oberlin College has received a \$750,000 grant from the Kulas Foundation to support the construction of a new jazz facility for Oberlin's Jazz Studies Department. The Kulas Foundation award, combined with a \$5 million commitment from Cleveland businessman Stewart Kohl and his wife, Donna, positions Oberlin near the halfway mark of its fund-raising goals for the building.

"The Kulas award represents the largest donation from the foundation in Oberlin's history," says Dean of the Conservatory David H. Stull. "It will certainly assist us in garnering support from the greater community. Our initial estimate is that the total project will cost \$12 million, and we'll be working hard to reach this goal within the next year."

Elroy J. Kulas, a Cleveland industrialist, established the Kulas Foundation in 1937. A major share of its annual giving goes toward various aspects of music, such as music education, grants to musical performing institutions, and music therapy.

The Kohls' gift, which was announced in November 2005 by Oberlin President Nancy S. Dye, is believed to be the largest gift ever given specifically for the support of jazz education at a college in the United States. Stewart Kohl, a 1977 Oberlin graduate and a member of the Oberlin Board of Trustees, is a managing partner of the Riverside Company, a leading private equity firm.

"Through their remarkable generosity, Stewart and Donna have launched a project to address our jazz department's desperate need for more space," says Stull. "In doing so, they are investing in the education of future generations of students at Oberlin."

According to Wendell Logan, Chair of the Jazz Studies Department and Professor of African American Music, the new facility will help the program from both a teaching perspective and a recruitment standpoint.

Tentatively scheduled to open in fall 2008, the building will be named in honor of Phyllis Litoff, a close friend of the Kohls' who died of brain cancer in 2002. Phyllis and her husband, Mel, were owners of the famed Greenwich Village jazz club Sweet Basil and founders of the Greenwich Village Jazz Festival. They later became artistic directors and producers of the Belleayre Music Festival.

Oberlin has selected the Cleveland architectural firm Westlake Reed Leskosky to design the building. According to initial plans, the facility will be connected to the south wing of the Conservatory, extending east from Robertson Hall, where a parking lot now sits. The first and second floors will be committed to the Jazz Studies Department,

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and the third story will house academic offices for the Conservatory. The facility will include a large rehearsal room for the Oberlin Jazz Ensemble, two mid-size rehearsal rooms for small ensembles, a library resources area, practice rooms, teaching studios, a computer laboratory, and a substantial storage area. An additional objective is for the building to acquire a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating, reflecting Oberlin's pioneering spirit in both music education and environmental responsibility.

"Paul Westlake is a marvelous architect," says Stull. "We're very excited—not only about the new space for jazz studies—but also about the aesthetic enhancement the structure will bring to the Conservatory."

About Westlake Reed Leskosky

Westlake Reed Leskosky is nationally recognized for its work in cultural and performing arts facilities. The firm's expertise in the planning and design of signature performing arts facilities was first demonstrated by the design of Blossom Music Center, the summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra. Since Blossom's creation, the firm has performed significant design work on more than 100 performance facilities nationwide and for two of the nation's three largest performing arts centers: Playhouse Square in Cleveland and the Denver Arts Center. The firm also has performed significant design work on dozens of museum and interpretive centers, libraries, and community centers, including notable projects for the Cleveland Museum of Art and Bethel Performing Arts and Interpretive Center (Woodstock).

About the Oberlin Conservatory of Music

The Oberlin Conservatory of Music, founded in 1865 and situated amid the intellectual vitality of Oberlin College since 1867, is the oldest continuously operating conservatory in the United States. Renowned internationally as a professional music school of the highest caliber and pronounced a "national treasure" by the *Washington Post*, its alumni have gone on to achieve illustrious careers in all aspects of the serious music world.

For more information about Oberlin, please visit www.oberlin.edu.

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