

OBERLIN

COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

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Oberlin College Receives Three \$4 Million Gifts for Jazz Education and Environmental Stewardship

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 (November 8, 2007)—Oberlin College President Marvin Krislov announced last week that three separate gifts in the amount of \$4 million each have been pledged to the College: \$8 million toward construction of the Phyllis Litoff Building, the new home for jazz studies, and \$4 million for environmental stewardship.

“Oberlin is a place where solutions to environmental issues are explored, and where the frontiers of music are expanded,” says President Krislov. “These gifts celebrate the leadership, creativity, and innovative spirit found throughout Oberlin College.”

The two gifts pledged to Oberlin in support of the Phyllis Litoff Building help to advance the Conservatory’s commitment to environmental sustainability; the Litoff Building is intended to be the first music facility in the world to attain a gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating. The LEED Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings.

Oberlin graduate Clyde McGregor ’74 of Chicago, Illinois, a member of Oberlin’s Board of Trustees, has pledged \$4 million to the Litoff Building. His gift is being made in honor of his mother, Lilly Marie Smith ’43.

Oberlin graduate Joseph Clonick ’57, also of Chicago, Illinois, who made an earlier gift of \$1 million dollars to support construction of the Litoff Building, has pledged an additional \$4 million. His contributions will support a recording studio and performance space for the project.

Both \$4 million gifts will augment the commitment by Cleveland businessman Stewart Kohl ’77 and his wife, Donna, who launched the Litoff building project in 2005 with a lead gift of \$5 million—the largest private gift in support of jazz education at a U.S. college.

“I am extremely grateful to Clyde McGregor and Joe Clonick for their extraordinary generosity and support for the Phyllis Litoff Building and Oberlin,” says Dean of the Conservatory David H. Stull. “Their leadership in ensuring the future excellence of the Conservatory of Music and the College of Arts and Sciences is remarkable, and we are all honored by these exceptional commitments from Mr. McGregor and Mr. Clonick.”

The Phyllis Litoff Building, which will be designed by the architectural firm of Westlake Reed Leskosky, will house the Oberlin Conservatory of Music’s jazz studies department and its academic programs in music history and music theory. In addition to the gold LEED rating to which the building aspires, it will include a world-class recording studio and the largest privately held jazz recording collection in the U.S.; the latter is a gift from James and Susan Neumann of Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Neumann is a 1958 graduate of Oberlin College.

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Oberlin College also received a record donation from the Kulas Foundation, in September 2006, in support of the building project, and one anonymous donor has pledged \$1 million. Friends of the project have made several other substantial gifts. The total project cost for the building, including specialized equipment for the recording studio, a number of new Steinway pianos, and an endowment, is projected at \$22 million. Oberlin plans to have the Litoff Building open for the 2009-10 school year.

The \$4 million gift in support of environmental stewardship at Oberlin comes from a Cleveland area family, which wishes to remain anonymous at this time. The family has committed \$2.5 million of its \$4 million gift for an endowed chair in environmental studies. An additional \$1 million of the \$4 million gift will be dedicated to technological upgrades within the Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies. The remaining \$500,000 will be earmarked for environmental planning grants to be shared by the College and the City of Oberlin.

“Environmental sustainability is an integral component of Oberlin’s Strategic Plan,” says President Krislov. “Environmentalism is one of the central callings of our time, and Oberlin is determined to play a leading role.”

About the Phyllis Litoff Building

The Litoff Building pays tribute to two individuals—the man who has personified jazz at Oberlin for the last 35 years, Wendell Logan, Professor of African American Music and Chair of the Jazz Studies Department, and the late Phyllis Litoff, New York City jazz impresario, cofounder of the famed jazz club Sweet Basil, and philanthropic muse.

“Under Wendell’s leadership, the Conservatory has become one of the world leaders in jazz education” says Dean Stull. “The jazz department retains a phenomenal faculty and a dynamic curriculum. This is undoubtedly the reason that we have drawn such an exceptional group of students. It is a great tribute to Wendell’s vision and his enormous personal investment that this program, its faculty, and its students are so highly regarded throughout the profession. This is the driving force behind the dream of creating a new home for jazz studies.”

“This is a building for playing music and learning about music,” says architect Paul Westlake. “If you did not have a sign on this building—if there were no conventional, graphic means of announcing its purpose—you would know that this is a music building by its imagery.”

After more than a year of discussions and meetings, Westlake Reed Leskosky’s design is as innovative as a sideman’s improvisation. Included are such startling riffs as a massive cantilevered roof, three stories high, which will hover in the air between the building and the Conservatory’s Robertson Hall, providing an iconic social space that Westlake calls “the soul of the Litoff Building.” Westlake envisions this shared realm—a lounge for the use of everyone at the Conservatory—as “a creative hub of thought, innovation, and creativity, an alluring magnet that will encourage social interaction.” Students, faculty, and staff will intersect here, taking advantage of its glass-walled westward views, wireless access, and caffeine-enhanced refreshment area—perfect for fueling late-night jam sessions.

Given Oberlin’s environmentally responsible values and leadership, it was not difficult, says Westlake, to achieve a basic LEED threshold. A commitment to using good building practices—local and recycled building materials, carpets and paints that produce no off-gases, and occupancy sensors that will monitor ventilation demands—along with other mechanical and plumbing factors, put Oberlin at the silver level.

But to go for the vaunted gold, a ranking few buildings achieve, is more than a challenge for Oberlin; it is a moral imperative. Doing so became a point of intrigue for the design team, as well. Research revealed that Oberlin's substrate is ideally suited for the use of a closed-loop, geothermal heating and cooling system. This extremely efficient system, in addition to being cost-effective, would effectively secure the building a gold LEED rating, the coveted A-plus on the U.S. Green Building Council's report card.

As an added value, using a geothermal radiant system reduces the need for ductwork, thereby reducing the need for penetrations in floors, ceilings, and walls that compromise acoustics. The environmentally responsible path is also the musically preferred path.

"This will be a flagship building for Oberlin," says Dean Stull. "The Litoff Building represents the essential nature of Oberlin through its ingenious design and its reflection of our values. It is brilliantly conceived to reflect who we are and what we stand for. It is about bringing all of us together and reflecting our dedication to the pursuit of great art, to harmony within our community, and the imperative need to steward our environment. It is highly innovative in its conception, which reflects the Conservatory's approach to all of its endeavors."

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. Oberlin offers a premier undergraduate jazz studies program, chaired by Professor of African American Music Wendell Logan, that prepares students for careers as professional jazz musicians and for advanced study in jazz. The jazz studies faculty includes composers and performers who, in addition to teaching lessons and coaching ensembles, maintain active performing careers throughout the world. Numerous Oberlin alumni have achieved success in the jazz idiom, among them keyboardist Ted Baker, pianist and composer Stanley Cowell, bassist, composer, and arranger Leon Lee Dorsey, pianist, arranger, and producer Allen Farnham, bassist Ben Jaffe, composer and pianist Jon Jang, writer, composer, and saxophonist James McBride, and trumpeter, trombonist, and composer Michael Mossman. For more information about Oberlin, please visit www.oberlin.edu/con.

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