

# CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

*Bringing the World to Indiana*



Since the much-heralded, week-long grand opening of the Palladium in January 2011, Carmel's Center for the Performing Arts has become an inviting gathering place for the community to come together to celebrate great art and engage in communal intimacy. With the opening of the Studio Theater later in March and the Tarkington

Theater in August, the three world-class venues have developed into a haven for local theater, dance, and music organizations. Three of the finest stages in the world now play host to the most gifted performers from across the United States and around the globe.

Located on the Monon Greenway in the heart of Carmel, the \$136 million project was created by a municipal bond issue and was the vision of Mayor James Brainard, Carmel's first four-term mayor. The Center for the Performing Arts is a focal point of Mayor Brainard's comprehensive economic development plan for the city and key to his efforts to revitalize the heart of Carmel.

## REALIZATION OF A DREAM

To bring the dream to reality, Carmel's city leaders spearheaded an effort to completely transform an abandoned strip mall setting into a state-of-the-art entertainment center. The location along the Monon Greenway was perfect for the 'walkability' atmosphere they wanted to create. Instead of a retro-fit, the multi-function complex was to be a complete start-up, a concept previously untried in Indiana. Each venue was going to be unique. The biggest challenge the founders faced was in explaining to the community what this new concept and this new facility would be.

One of the key people involved in the dissemination of that message and who proved to be integral to the success of the Center is Michael Feinstein. In 2008, the legendary singer/pianist located the headquarters of the Feinstein

Foundation for the Education and Preservation of *The Great American Songbook* in Carmel and was tapped as the artistic director of the Center for the Performing Arts. It is certain that Feinstein's name and reputation were instrumental in assembling the star-studded list of performers that would open the Center. "It added a lot of cachet to what we were doing and, in some cases, it helped us close the deal," notes John Hughey, the Center's Director of Public Relations.



The founders' goal for the Center was to attract artists who would be making their first appearance in Indianapolis as well as those who had not performed in the area in quite a while. They accomplished just that. The inaugural season, sponsored by St. Vincent Health, featured such diverse names and musical genres as Clint Black, the Cleveland Orchestra, Marvin Hamlisch, Marcus Miller, the Vienna Boys Choir, and Yolanda Adams. The Palladium's gala opening concert on January 29 featured Michael Feinstein along with jazz trumpeter Chris Botti and the Carmel Symphony Orchestra. The Center has now achieved a reputation for attracting international artists who would have bypassed Indianapolis. Its wide mixture of genres has had a broad appeal to followers of country, blues, jazz, and other musical genres.



A major part of the allure of the Palladium is the physical grandeur of the facility itself. Built of limestone from southern Indiana, it features the world's largest all-glass canopy and has become a recognized landmark on the city's skyline. The unparalleled acoustics are the work of Artec Consultants, a New York-based firm that has become a global leader in the design and planning of innovative performing arts facilities. "We're very proud of the fact that the Palladium is an Artec hall," Hughey states. "There isn't any other complex built in North America where so much attention has been paid to acoustics."

- ▶ Actors Theatre of Indiana
- ▶ Booth Tarkington Civic Theatre
- ▶ Carmel Repertory Theatre
- ▶ Carmel Symphony Orchestra
- ▶ Central Indiana Dance Ensemble
- ▶ Gregory Hancock Dance Theatre
- ▶ Indiana Wind Symphony

**FULFILLING ITS MISSION**

Some of the highest accolades for the Center have come from the artists themselves who have performed there. "The Center for the Performing Arts is certainly one of the finest in the country," attested Michael Feinstein after his opening night performance at the Palladium. Feinstein's comments were mirrored by those of recording superstar Dionne Warwick. "This is spectacular," she said. "It is definitely a symphony hall. You really don't need a microphone here."

"We feel we have succeeded in creating a world-class facility that has become the centerpiece of the downtown city center," Hughey relates. "We have drawn visitors from



more than 100 cities and towns across Indiana and throughout the Midwest to our wide range of musical, theater, and dance performances. We are very proud of the artistic legacy that we are creating in Carmel, a legacy that will be passed along to our children and grandchildren for generations to come."



**LIVE THEATER**

The 200-seat Studio Theater and the 500-seat Tarkington Theater round out the venues at the Center for the Performing Arts. Conceived along a flexible "black box" configuration with the ability to stage concerts and theatrical productions, the Studio Theater is fast becoming recognized as ideal for intimate performances designed to nurture local and national artists. Likewise, the Tarkington Theater is poised to become a popular venue for dance, theater, and a setting for periodic festivals celebrating art alongside food and wine.

In addition to hosting national performers, the two theaters have already become home to resident companies and their productions. Groups currently calling the Center for the Performing Arts their home include:

*Carmel: 'round about right*

