



THE ARMS MUSIC CENTER

A COMPARATIVE FACILITY REPORT

MARSHALL NANNES '09

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Arms Music Center Report

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In 1968, Amherst's decade-long capital campaign saw another building completed, and the college music department, already too big for its space in the Octagon, happily moved into what would eventually become the Arms Music Center. The new facility featured rehearsal rooms for the college glee club, practice rooms for students, and two classrooms for academic uses, as well as the Buckley Recital Hall, all designed in the latest architectural style. The building accommodated a growing department and gave it more options for instruction and performance of music.

In the forty years since the Arms Center was opened, much has changed at the college. The music department reflects this; the choral society now includes four groups, the Amherst symphony began performing, electronic and world music gained increased importance, and the popularity of the department grew beyond what was envisioned when the building was designed. Today, the facility sits at the end of its useful life, without adequate performance, rehearsal, or instructional space.

The shortcomings of Arms affect the entire college. While no one comes to Amherst looking for conservatory-style music training, many come planning on making music a large

part of their undergraduate education. Indeed, forty percent of Amherst students are involved in music, a larger percentage than in varsity sports. When high school juniors and seniors do not find at Amherst the spaces needed to facilitate their involvement and realize their desires, they will go elsewhere. In Williamstown, Brunswick, and all across New England, schools are making investments in their arts facilities and will soon draw more interest and more students from a shrinking college-age population.

So it is with interest both in our own musical careers and the future well-being of the "Singing College" that we have compiled this report on our music center and the music facilities of our peer institutions.



Arms Music Center

This report contains three sections. The first is an assessment of the shortcomings of Arms Music Center, covering everything from acoustics to exterior aesthetics. The second section is a comparative analysis of music facilities at seven other New England schools, compiled during a trip in March 2007. The final section examines the problems of Arms in relation to the positive aspects of the facilities of the other schools in order to make recommendations for our building.

In compiling this report, we hope to highlight the growing inadequacy of the Arms Center and the very real need for remediation, and to help the college live up to its reputation and history as a great place to make music.

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The Arms Center Today

Examining the plans and the notes of the architect of the Arms Center, which Professor Jenny Kallick still retains, it is quite obvious that the college saw itself as building a lavish and very respectable new home for the music department. That assessment is not incorrect. At the time, the college was home to only two *a cappella* groups, one choral ensemble, and very little in the way of academic music offerings. The planned center was more than capable of handling such activities.

Yet, the building has not kept pace with the changes since 1967. The enrollment has increased by more than 400 students. The adoption of coeducation allowed the music department offerings to expand to accommodate mixed and women's groups. The faculty and staff have grown from five full-time employees in 1967 to eleven today, and from zero adjunct instructors of instruments and voice to nearly 30. Each class at Amherst now has about twelve to fifteen music majors, and many additional students who study and perform music without majoring. More people are using the building today, but the rehearsal, practice, instruction, and performance space in the Arms Center are no different from those laid out forty years ago.

However, college literature describes facilities that have improved. Through a combination of unwarranted optimism and factual inaccuracies, college publications praise the Arms Center as a perfectly decent facility. The main campus map describes "the 500 seat Buckley Concert Hall," "plentiful practice and rehearsal space," and the Vincent Morgan Music Library as amenities of the center. Unfortunately, these are all at best only partially accurate.

THE HALL

Buckley was built as the main performance space for the music department in 1967 and today is still the only performance hall for the music department. But in contrast to the picture painted by the campus map, the hall is a recital, not a concert venue, and its seating capacity is actually 454. Though it was built as a recital hall, it now has three different functions for the department: it continues to host small student recitals, from individual honors recitals to chamber music performances; it serves as a concert hall for the largest concerts on campus like the homecoming concerts and the very popular choral-orchestral concert each spring; and it hosts nearly all dramatic music productions on campus. The acoustics and seating capacity needed for these events are vastly different, yet Buckley is not particularly flexible in accommodating them. The booming hall swallows diction and articulation from the choirs and orchestra, and the most popular performances must turn many people away because of limited seating capacity. Individual recitals, which draw a smaller crowd, sometimes struggle to fill a hall much too large for a more intimate concert, and artists perform for an audience that barely fills the first few rows.



Pat Savage 07's composition thesis on the Calvin and Hobbes comic strip series was one of several productions during that year that was forced to turn away patrons due to the limited seating capacity of the hall.

But it is the frequent dramatic productions in Buckley that show the venue's real shortcomings. One department-sponsored musical takes place in Buckley each January, and various operatic productions are produced throughout the year. Designed as a recital venue, Buckley was not planned to house theatrical productions and is used to present dramatic productions only because no other facility is available. In 2004, basic lighting equipment was installed. Still, for each production, additional lighting must be rented and installed at great expense. The 2007 production of *City of Angels* required the construction of three massive scaffolding towers from which lights were hung. Even with these rentals and temporary improvements, the lighting in the hall can never replicate a theatrical setting.



The conversion of Buckley into a useable theatrical space requires the renting and erecting of thousands of dollars worth of equipment. The lengthy construction process not only detracts from limited rehearsal time but also cannot ever replicate a true theater space.

City of Angels also exposed a far more dangerous problem with the state of theatrical lighting in Buckley. While performing routine lighting maintenance, a UMass student serving as technical director was seriously injured after a fall from a ladder. Such safety accidents are uncommon, but they serve as a reminder that Buckley's inadequacies are not simply artistic problems. New safety procedures were implemented following the accident, including require-

ments that only hired professionals may hang lights, but this makes theatrical productions vastly more expensive. Fears about using the choral loft also complicate all types of productions. For the 2007 choral-orchestral concert of Mozart's *Requiem*, both the choir and orchestra had to squeeze onto the stage because of concerns about so many people on the rear balcony. Precautions are in place to prevent the next fall or accident, but these steps only further restrict performance possibilities in an already sub-par space.

The orchestra needed for dramatic productions has no pit. The first two rows of seats are removed and the orchestra crowds into the small space between the stage and remaining seats. This blocks the stage from many angles and also interferes with the acoustics of a production, since human voices cannot compete with a band filled with brass and other instruments. The hall also lacks the capacity to deal with large set pieces or provide a backstage area. There are no wings on the hall, so anything too large to move through the double doors in the rear cannot make it on-stage. For each production, students need to hang up curtains haphazardly around the hall and half of the stage must be converted from usable performance space into a makeshift backstage. Because of this problem, any dramatic production instantly becomes more complex, and many types of dramatic productions are outright impossible.

Buckley was built as a one-size-fits-all space, which was certainly adequate for the less-diverse performances at the college during the sixties and seventies. Designed for string quartets, choirs, and solo piano, Buckley is particularly unsuited to any performance, such as jazz and theater, that requires amplification. Today, the music scene at Amherst includes solo recitals, chamber performance, jazz combos, large concerts, and dramatic music events too diverse to be presented in a space as inflexible as Buckley.

PRACTICE AND REHEARSAL SPACE

The Arms Center was designed with fourteen practice rooms, in addition to the piano, harpsichord, instrumental, and choral rooms downstairs. Today, the harpsichord and piano rooms have been converted into offices, and three of the remaining 14 rooms have been converted into various types of other spaces. The “plentiful practice and rehearsal space” described in the campus map does not exist.



Buckley was home to the original recordings of two world-premiere operas in just six months: Eric Sawyer's "Our American Cousin" and Lewis Spratlan and Jenny Kallick's "Wink." Because Arms is not sound-proofed, noise in the rest of the building must be minimized to allow recording to take place, leading to a further curtailment of the building's usefulness and the familiar sight of pleas like this one for silence.

Today, the building has only eleven rooms available to students. Of these, only two are large enough to hold chamber ensembles or a *cappella* groups. The lack of space creates serious problems. All of the rooms are full at many hours of the day and night. Unlike English or history students, music students cannot simply “go somewhere else” to practice or complete theory work, as this work almost always requires a piano and a private space. The space crunch is most clearly visible on the second Sunday of each semester, when students line up hours in advance outside of the music office to reserve time in the scarce rooms for the semester.

Rehearsing for larger productions, such as the 2006 opera *Le Nozze di Figaro*, is impossible. There are no spaces in the building, besides the stage itself, that can house staging rehearsals. Since the hall is rarely available for this type of student use, the atrium, the green room, and the exterior porch are all drafted into service as makeshift and embarrassingly inadequate temporary stages.

ACADEMIC SPACE

The six practice rooms taken out of student circulation were all needed when the faculty and academic offerings of the building outgrew the building's 1967 size. One was until this summer the copy room for the department, and four of the largest rooms became offices for the growing faculty of the department. The space shortage in the building is so severe that when Dillard University professor Lucius Weathersby came to Amherst after Hurricane Katrina, he was forced to use half the copy room as his office, since there was no space to devote to a new faculty member. The sixth practice room was converted into the electronic music studio after a grant was given for that purpose five years ago. Professor Eric Sawyer, who is responsible for the studio, laments the cramped size and lack of soundproofing that hamper work in the studio today. The grant did not provide enough money for a more appropriate space or additional staff to run the facility, so the department can now offer only one class in electronic music each semester in a room that was built before a course in electronic music was envisioned.



The Morgan Library was not designed to serve its current function, so in addition to being structurally unable to carry more books, the library lacks enough space for its growing collection. Card catalogs still take up much space in the small room, and CD racks for the department's many recordings can be seen in the background.

ACOUSTIC SEPARATION

Perhaps the most glaring oversight in the design of the Arms building is that it is not soundproof. This creates problems in all areas of the building. Individual practice rooms share walls, and sound



Water damage to the ceiling and floor from a leak in the choral room has sat without repair for years, another sign of the apparently low priority placed on maintenance of the Music Center.

bleeds through loudly enough to impair the activities of students. Vocalists often describe the difficulty of competing with an instrument next door, while louder musical instruments, such as brass, can bleed through the walls to disrupt classes. Given the lack of rooms available even under the best circumstances, it is even more unfortunate that many become useless simply because of this oversight in their original design. Amplified instruments can be heard throughout the entire building no matter where they are being played.

There was no jazz program at Amherst when the Arms Center was conceived. While the Jazz program has made a home for itself in the instrumental rehearsal room, the space was not designed to deal with amplification or a jazz drum set. Sound bleeds into the choral room, even though it is separated by three sets of doors, and can disrupt rehearsals two floors above. Noise from the instrumental rooms can even be heard inside Buckley Hall with both sets of doors closed. Considering the caliber of student and visiting artist performances in the hall, it is sad to think that they are disrupted by a problem that is easy to fix.

MUSIC LIBRARY

The Vincent Morgan Music Library, one of the college's four libraries, suffers from the same problems that plague all of the other facilities in Buckley. What began in 1967 as a music listening lounge has become a well-stocked music library without enough room for its collection of books, recordings, and scores. The space occupied by the Music Library was not intended to carry the weight of densely packed books or CDs. Much of the library's collection has been moved to the storage bunker because the building cannot support the weight of densely packed shelves. CDs are stored on racks haphazardly set up close to the circulation desk with no way to prevent anyone from stealing a CD from the collection. Card catalogs still have not been removed from the library years after the switch to a digital catalog, and the structures continue to take up valuable space.

Furthermore, the Morgan Library is separated from the rest of the building only by glass. The natural light is a welcome amenity, but glass does not block sound from conversations in the atrium or performances across the hall, so library patrons must often study while distracted by all types of noise. Finally, as severe as these shortcomings are, they are experienced only by those able to climb several sets of stairs. On the top floor of a building without an elevator, the Morgan Library is not handicap accessible, and therefore is inaccessible to those with disabilities or temporary injuries.

AESTHETIC CONCERNS

The Arms Center and Buckley Recital Hall display aspects of the late-1960s-style brutalism that characterize the buildings of UMass's Haigis Mall. The monolithic building is constructed of concrete and brick, with many windows recessed between large brick walls or, in the practice rooms, arranged as barely-visible slits in the brick facade. The recital hall itself also reflects this outdated architecture. Exposed concrete and bare light bulbs abound. Many seats in both of the balconies offer restricted views. The hall's enormous rear wall is dull and blank - its planned pipe organ was never installed after funds for the original building were slashed. Buckley Recital Hall, as Amherst's largest performance space, welcomes most of the college's visiting artists. Yet, these professionals are forced to perform in an acoustically sub-par and aesthetically unattractive space.

The rest of the building has similar problems. Furniture throughout is worn out, including the chairs in the Green Room that hosts many world-class musicians. The floor is old and creaky in several parts of the building - simply walking up or down a staircase betrays the building's poor



The view of the Arms Center from Route 9 shows its unwelcoming facade. Only one window in the entire structure is prominent. The rest of the building serves as a massive brick wall between campus and the town.

condition. The corridors around the practice rooms are dimly lit and without windows, while curtains in offices and classrooms have broken and collapsed. The rear corner of the choral room has sprung a leak in the ceiling, and the obvious accumulated water damage has remained for years without attempts to fix it.

The aesthetic problems with the building take a lower priority than the problems with the building's educational capacity, but they are not without merit. The Arms Center occupies a prominent space on the Amherst campus; next to Converse Hall and the campus bus stop, along busy Route 9 and very close to and visible from the town of Amherst. Arms is an architectural ambassador to its surroundings, and the fortress-like façade and lack of entrances from the town side combine to form a building that is closed and unwelcoming to its surroundings. The building is equally uninviting to the faculty, students, and visitors who must work and occupy it, some for many hours a day. The new Geology building was built with a major focus on interior aesthetics: clearly, the college understands that an inviting interior can positively affect the academic environment inside. Thus, while aesthetic concerns are not as pressing as the problems with safety and academic, practice, and performance capabilities, they are very real problems and must be considered along with the rest of the Arms Center's shortcomings.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Arms Center no longer is able to provide a stimulating or even adequate home for the musical arts at Amherst. Its condition is a symbol of an attitude, either truly present or merely imagined by prospective students, that music is not valuable enough to our school to merit a decent facility, a planned upgrade, or even short-term fixes for smaller problems.

We visited seven schools in March of 2007 to compare the Arms Center with the buildings of our peer institutions. The facilities we saw exhibit fundamental advantages over Buckley in nearly every way. Every other school has made or is planning upgrades and fixes to their buildings to ensure adequate, and often stellar, music centers.

Described here are the music facilities at Williams, Middlebury, Dartmouth, Bowdoin, Brown, Yale, and Wesleyan. In addition, we investigated the music performance scene that each campus's facilities supported, and we talked with faculty at each school to find what improvements were planned for the near future.

WILLIAMS COLLEGE



MAIN FACILITY: Bernhard Music Center, 1979

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Chapin Hall (1,100 Seats), Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall (250 seats), Thompson Chapel

ALTERNATE FACILITY: '62 Center for Theater and Dance

ALTERNATE PERFORMANCE VENUES: Mainstage (550 seats), Adams Memorial Stage (220 seats), Centerstage Black Box (150 seats)

PRACTICE FACILITIES: approx 25 rooms, most with pianos

FULL TIME FACULTY: 10, plus adjunct instructors

MAJORS PER CLASS: 6-7

WILLIAMS FACILITIES

The music department at Williams College is housed mainly in the Bernhard Music Center, attached to the side of Chapin Hall. The Bernhard Center houses practice, rehearsal, performance, and academic space for the department.

Practice rooms, on the first floor of the building, had just received a facelift including new paint and carpeting. Professor Bradley Wells, our host at Williams, stated that he felt the 25 or so rooms were adequate for the campus, and was shocked to hear of the lines that form when Amherst students must scramble for rooms. Practice rooms are acoustically separate and plentiful enough to share with the independent *a cappella* groups on campus. The building houses two classrooms and large choral and instrumental rehearsal rooms. Also in Bernhard is the large electronic music studio/piano lab, with several different stations to allow multiple students to work at once. Off-site, in the main Sawyer Library, is the department's music library. Wells credited its comprehensive collection with helping to keep faculty at the college, and believes that it entices many serious music students and faculty to the college.



Chapin Hall, the college's largest, seats over 1,000, allowing for big crowds as well as flexibility in performance. Seats were removed when the stage was enlarged, but plenty are left for major concerts.



The 550-seat Mainstage in the brand new '62 Center

Performance space at Williams is much more varied than at Amherst. The small Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall in the Bernhard center hosts smaller, intimate concerts like recitals and chamber music. Larger concerts are presented in the magnificent 100-year-old Chapin Hall next door. The venue's large capacity gives it flexibility; seats have been removed to accommodate a growing or-

chestra without seriously limiting the capacity of the hall. Chapin also hosts visiting speakers who draw a large audience. Across campus is the brand new '62 Center for Theater and Dance. Though it is primarily a theater facility with three different state-of-the-art performance venues, recent collaborations between the Theater and Music departments at Williams have produced great results. Professor Wells regularly rehearses choirs in the '62 Center, and the stage was filled with marimbas during our visit in preparation for an upcoming music concert. Wells also described with enthusiasm his plans to host operas in the theater facility; the lights, pit, curtains, and backstage areas he has at his disposal are all absent from Buckley, making the production of hits like *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Candide* at Amherst immensely difficult.



The electronic music lab and piano lab share the same space in the Bernhard center. Several computer workstations allow simultaneous work on electronic projects while the keyboards, each with headphones and their own workstations, allow students to practice even if all the practice rooms are taken.

PERFORMANCE SCENE

The spectacular new facilities at Williams can support a much more diverse music performance scene than Buckley can. As mentioned previously, the sufficient number of practice rooms on campus allows the department to share them with the independent *a cappella* groups. Williams boasts a vibrant musical theater scene, with most activity coming from the student-run Cap and Bells theater program. The club mounts at least one major musical and several smaller plays each year, many in the brand-new '62 Center for Theater and Dance. A new performance space was also incorporated into the newly opened campus center, though it is too new to have mounted a full production yet. Finally, Wells' plans for opera performances in the new Center are almost impossible to replicate at Amherst, considering the logistical and safety problems with converting Buckley into a theatrical space.

PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

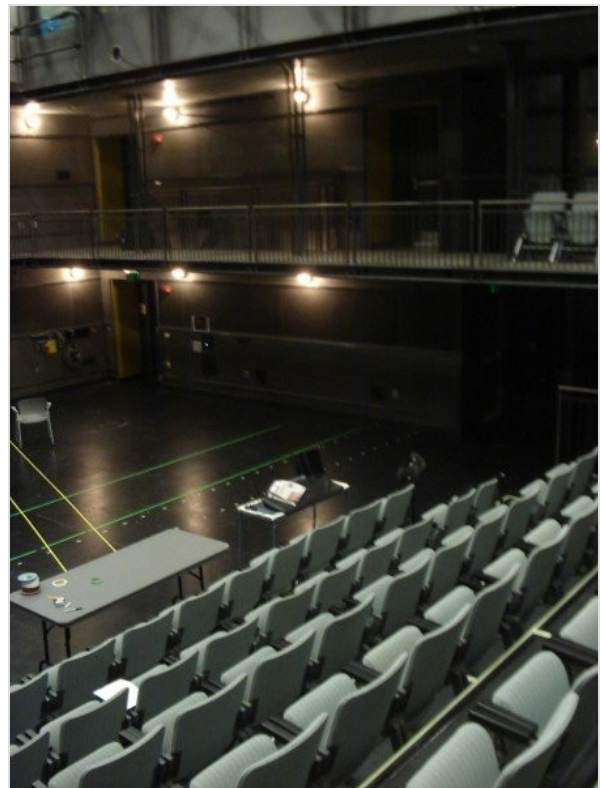
The arts at Williams have received a major boost from the opening of the '62 Center, but the college is not done with improvements to the music facilities. "We are at about year six of a ten-year building program," Wells explained, and music is usually somewhere near the top of the list, depending on whom one asks. He said that the facility will be replaced by the end of this construction cycle. But even though this new building has yet to be constructed, the performance facilities at Williams run circles around the Arms Center. Both the state-of-the-art '62 Center, and the venues in the Bernhard center allow for much more varied performance than Buckley does. These facilities, combined with the work done by student groups and the cooperation between the performing arts departments, create a vibrant and well-supported arts scene on the Williams campus, and the school's investment in the arts facilities is apparent to visiting students.



Brooks-Rogers Hall (above) and the Centerstage (right), two additional performance halls on Williams' campus.

Brooks-Rogers is host to chamber music concerts, dance performances, a cappella groups, and other smaller music events.

The Centerstage is a state-of-the-art facility that is acoustically separate from the other halls in the '62 Center.



MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE



MAIN FACILITY: Center for Fine Arts, 1992

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Concert Hall, 400 seats; Black-Box Seeler Theater

PRACTICE FACILITIES: 8 individual practice rooms, 3 group practice rooms

MAJORS PER CLASS: About 10

MIDDLEBURY FACILITIES

The Center for Fine Arts, as its name suggests, is not only a music facility but also a comprehensive and inviting home for all of the arts at Middlebury. It is a hub for many types of creative activity on campus and, though not a recent addition to campus, is still a state-of-the-art building. Composition professor Peter Hamlin showed us the building's assets. The inviting, airy lobby contains the entrances to the Center's two main halls- the 400 seat concert hall and the Seeler black-box theater. The concert hall is a contemporary space that is at once impressively large and intimately small. The open lower level houses a cafe and comfortable study nooks for students, as well as the entrance to the art museum in the center. The entire building is decorated with artwork by students. There are eight practice rooms in the CFA, all with effective acoustic separation and some with skylights. Three larger rooms are used for group practice. The two-level music library is integrated into the building, allowing the same convenient access to scores that professors and students enjoy in Arms.

PERFORMANCE SCENE

Dramatic music is a constant presence on the Middlebury campus; the arts departments sponsor one theatrical production a year, while the Middlebury College Musical Players produce between five and ten musical productions a year. Student *a cappella* groups are supported by the Middlebury student government and are assigned rehearsal space on the campus. Though all of these clubs are independent, they do work with the music department in limited ways. Professor Hamlin laid out his ideas for a program to mentor student directors in charge of these MCMP shows, and his department recently sponsored an *a cappella* summit for student performers. He said that he is an advocate for more musicals at Middlebury, despite the numerous productions already on campus. Across the lobby from the Concert Hall, student technicians were working on the set for the CFA's upcoming production of *Cabaret*. On the same afternoon as our meeting, Professor Hamlin



The concert hall in the CFA accommodates both intimate recitals and larger performances. Students, like this one, have extensive opportunities to rehearse in the hall before upcoming events.



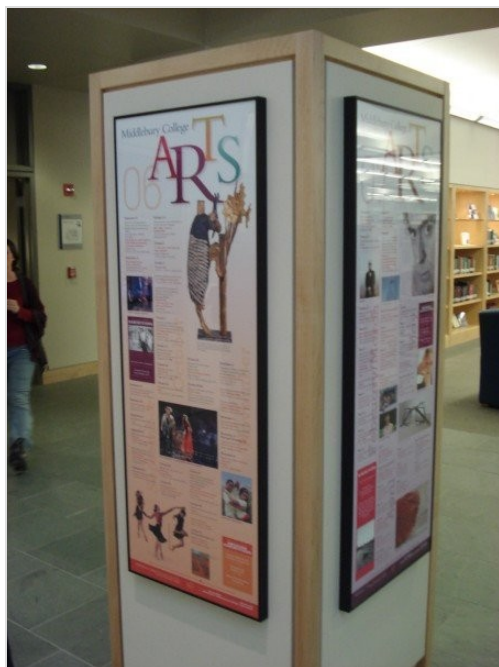
The attractive, airy atrium of the CFA occupies much of the building. All of the main venues, as well as academic areas, study space, and the cafe, are accessible from this central space.

conducted an interview for a new full-time choral conducting position, reflecting the renewed emphasis on the choral program at the college. The Middlebury Orchestra has been growing and the conductor is also developing an extensive chamber music program. The jazz band, which had been a student-run group, and therefore inconsistent from year to year depending upon student interest and leadership, is now an official part of the Music Department.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Though the CFA serves the needs of Middlebury music well, Professor Hamlin did see some shortcomings. He has lobbied for more practice space in the building, and praised the attempts by the college administration to try to rectify the problem. A feasibility study was recently completed to study the cost of remodeling a classroom to house more practice space. The college is continuing its search to alleviate the strain on practice facilities.

The department too has recently found itself getting more help from both the administration and other faculty on campus. In addition to the enthusiastic search for more practice space, the president regularly invites students into his home to give chamber concerts for the trustees. Hamlin is often



The CFA publishes many full-color guides to the arts offerings on campus. They are sent to subscribers and made available to guests in the center. This poster was displayed in the library, where it was sure to reach a very diverse audience.

encouraged by professors outside the arts eager to support improvements in music programs. For example, a strong recommendation in the strategic plan for ensemble touring seems to be widely supported by faculty across the campus.

Aside from the search for more practice space, there are no major plans for new investments in the arts facilities at Middlebury. This stems not from the inattention of the administration, but rather from a general satisfaction with the way the CFA functions in its present state. Though it is fifteen years old, it has been impeccably maintained and could easily pass as a brand-new building. As we entered the CFA, we encountered an admissions tour drawing to a close in the atrium of the building. As tour guides ourselves, we found the comparison with Amherst to be striking. At Middlebury, the arts facility is a major asset to the school and serves as the final stop, and lasting impression, for students touring the campus. At Amherst, Kirby Theater remains locked and the Arms Center is not even

passed on most tours. This difference in the presentation of music and theater facilities is certainly not lost on the prospective student with an interest in the arts.



Students at work in the CFA Black Box on their production of Cabaret



The 2-level music library in the CFA

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE



MAIN FACILITY: Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1962

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Spaulding Auditorium (900 seats), Moore Theater (480 seats), Warner Bentley Theater (180 seats), Faulkner Recital Hall (90 seats), Rollins Chapel

PRACTICE FACILITIES: 11 practice rooms

DARTMOUTH FACILITIES

The department of music at Dartmouth is housed in the Hopkins Center, a multipurpose arts building that supports dance, theatrical, and musical performances. Since the music department has not been renovated at all since its opening, the facilities at Dartmouth are a nice comparison to those at Amherst.

The main concert hall at Dartmouth, Spaulding Auditorium, is a space twice the size of any at Amherst. The department likes the acoustics, and the design is modern and chic. Spaulding can also be used for film screenings. The other halls are used for both performance and lecture, and spaces like the Faulkner Recital Hall are employed for rehearsals, as well. The Hop also is home to the Moore Theater and Leow Auditorium (204 seats).



The 900-seat Spaulding Auditorium, the largest in the Hopkins Center. Spaulding hosts large orchestra concerts as well as smaller performances by student ensembles. It is also equipped for film screenings.

Though the music department itself has not been renovated since 1962, the building has undergone extensive aesthetic and functional renovation in its hallways and performance spaces (including the addition of a cafe), creating a beautiful, modern building capable of supporting the entire college's arts programs. In fact, in 1988 the National Endowment for the Arts named the Hopkins Center one of the nation's best performing arts centers. Aside from the 11 practice rooms, the music department has a recording studio that is accessible to individual students as well as a cappella groups. The department also houses the Bregman Electronic Music Studio, a space available to students interested in electronic composition and research. The chorus practices in Faulkner Recital Hall (bigger than but comparable to Room 3), and the orchestra practices in a large classroom. This classroom, as well as the one below it, used to be one large room, but was divided into two rooms to accommodate increased class sizes and offerings. Though the rooms are not acoustically separate, the department seems satisfied with the additional space.

Still, since the department has not been renovated since 1962, there were some inevitable complaints

Though the music department itself has not been renovated since 1962, the building has undergone extensive aesthetic and functional renovation in its hallways and performance spaces (including the addition of a cafe), creating a beautiful, modern building capable of supporting the entire college's arts programs. In fact, in 1988 the National Endowment for the Arts named the Hopkins Center one of the nation's best performing arts centers. Aside from the 11 practice rooms, the music



Inside the 480-seat Moore Theater

about the lack of adequate practice and classroom space. Yet, despite these complaints, Dartmouth boasts a considerable number of amenities that Buckley does not offer. Between the lockers, many rehearsal rooms, new concert spaces, and electronic and recording studios, Dartmouth's facilities can serve many more functions and can house many more events than Amherst's.

PERFORMANCE SCENE

With nine ensembles, many acclaimed *a cappella* groups, and nine extracurricular student-run music groups, all forms of musical performance are possible and thrive at Dartmouth. One of the student groups, the Harlequins, is strictly devoted to the production of musical theater at the college. Since theater space is so accessible, both the theater department and the student group produce a play each semester, and musical theater thrives ("Hair" is slated for Fall 2007). The space is also inviting to visiting artists, and "The Hop" has an extremely full calendar of events. Because all of the arts departments share one facility, their events are all published in the same calendar, creating a wonderfully diverse brochure of performances for the year that also includes concerts by student groups.

FUTURE PLANS

Though most of "The Hop" has had significant modernization work, the music department has not been renovated since the building's completion in 1962. Yet, despite this oversight, the music department is still finding ways to improve. Our host, Dr. Ted Levin, had to end our interview early in order to attend a meeting regarding the conversion of a reception space, Alumni Hall in the Hopkins Center, into a small performance/rehearsal space. In light of complaints that rehearsal space is lacking, the department has fought extremely hard for small changes such as the Alumni Hall conversion, and in the future looks to extend its success with additional proposals to the President for a massive overhaul of the department, including the potential construction of new buildings for music and theater.

One final thing to note is that Dr. Levin, the chair of the music department at Dartmouth, is a graduate of Amherst College. Dr. Levin attended the college when Buckley was first opened, and has returned to the college for many years, most notably helping to form the Global Sound Project. Dr. Levin, an ethnomusicologist, praised Amherst's efforts to expand its curricular diversity,

stating that its curriculum is more pluralistic than those of its rival colleges, with the exception of Wesleyan. Dr. Levin, however, completely agreed with our assessment of Buckley; he felt that though Amherst has a great faculty that has produced many successful members of the music community, its facilities are in need of renovation in order to provide its students with adequate opportunities to perform and practice. It was ironic to hear his memories of Buckley's first days as the "beautiful new music building" contrasted with his (and our) impression of the building's outdated state today.



The Main Entrance to "The Hop" doubles as a lounge and lobby for the Moore Theater.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE



MAIN FACILITY: Gibson Hall, 1950 (renovated 2004)

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Tillotson Hall (68 seats), Studzinski Recital Hall (250 seats)

ADDITIONAL VENUES: Kresge Auditorium (270 seats), Pickard Theater (600 seats)

PRACTICE FACILITIES: 14 practice rooms

MAJORS PER CLASS: 4-5

BOWDOIN FACILITIES

On the school's main quad is Gibson Hall, the recently renovated home of the academic music facilities. At one end of the building is Tillotson Hall, a small performance space that is also used as a choral rehearsal room and lecture hall for large music classes. At the opposite end of Gibson is Bowdoin's music library, with many computer stations and some study carrels for seniors working on theses. Delmar Small, our host at Bowdoin, praised the collection as very comprehensive, especially in the areas of interest to the faculty. Mr. Small showed us a room in Gibson that would soon become the new home of the electronic music studio, which had been "floating" around campus without a dedicated home. Classrooms and practice rooms make up much of the rest of the building.

The most impressive facility at Bowdoin was under construction at the time of our visit. The \$15 million Studzinski Recital Hall, which opened in May, will fundamentally alter the arts scene on campus, said Mr. Small. Though there are at least three other performance halls on the campus, with varying uses and sizes, this is the first one designed specifically to host large musical performances. In addition to the hall, the



Photo Credit: Bowdoin.edu

The state-of-the-art Studzinski Recital Hall opened in May. The new complex will serve as a major arts and performance hub for the college.

building includes a large rehearsal room, nine practice rooms and plentiful lockers downstairs, as well as a green room for student and visiting performers. The entire building is soundproofed; Mr.



Bowdoin's recently restored chapel, complete with new organ

Small explained that two different groups could perform on stage and in the rehearsal hall – separated by only one wall – without disturbing each other. Large acoustic panels in the main hall of the building can be activated to change the properties of the hall depending on the performance taking place.

Also available for performances at Bowdoin are the 270-seat Kresge Auditorium and the 600-seat Pickard Theater, in the beautifully renovated theater complex. While both of these venues hosted music events in the past, they have become less important since the opening of Studzinski. The Bowdoin College Chapel, home to many musical performances, was also recently restored and a new organ was installed.

PERFORMANCE SCENE

Studzinski is a welcome addition for Bowdoin, which has been without a space like this until now. “We would have had to curtail the offerings of the program without a new building,” said Mr. Small. With the construction of Studzinski Hall, the campus performing groups will finally have a dedicated and gorgeous home. Kresge Auditorium, which formerly hosted most music concerts, will now be largely vacant, and the main theater will also be available for use by musical performers outside of the department.



Tollitson Hall, renovated with most of the building, seats 68. In addition to performances, it also is home to lecture classes as well as choral rehearsals.

Music groups at Bowdoin are similar to those at Amherst. There are two choirs, a jazz band and wind ensemble, and an orchestra that convenes to accompany the choir for choral-orchestral concerts. Five *a cappella* groups operate independently of the department, though they use the facilities in Gibson Hall. A student club presents musicals in the main theater, assisted by the theater and music departments. The two departments share resources for the musicals and operas have been produced in the past.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

As one would expect, there are few plans to do much to Bowdoin’s facilities in the wake of the renovation of Gibson and the construction of Studzinski. Most future plans involve administrative changes rather than new construction.

Greatly benefiting the music department is the very pro-music attitude of Bowdoin’s president. “There had been talk of a building [like Studzinski] for twenty years,” explained Small, but it took the new president to turn that talk into a building, he added. The president has also issued a directive to the admissions office to look for more artistically-inclined applicants when deciding on pro-

spective students. Both the building and the directive will certainly have a positive effect on the performance arts at Bowdoin.

With 1,600 students, Bowdoin is an excellent comparison to Amherst in almost all musical areas. Students looking for a small, elite liberal-arts education are likely to investigate both schools. The department sizes and student performance groups at Bowdoin are very similar to Amherst's. But like Middlebury, Bowdoin's investment in the arts is much more visible than is ours. During our visit, we saw two brand-new theater spaces, a \$15 million music performance hall, and a recently renovated music classroom building complete with a performance hall and new electronic music studio. Visiting students will find no such investments on our campus, and will instead notice the poor quality of our facilities available to both produce and perform music. This fact, combined with the actions of the pro-arts administration at Bowdoin, make the school a serious competitor for the musically-inclined students that Amherst hopes to attract.



The 270-seat Kresge Auditorium was once a main venue of the Music Department, but since the construction of Studzinski, this hall will be made available for student uses.



Bowdoin's music library, in Gibson Hall

BROWN UNIVERSITY



MAIN FACILITY: Orwig Music Building, 1905

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES: Grant Recital Hall (renovated 2007, 180 seats), Stewart Theater, Leeds Theater, T. F. Green Hall

PRACTICE FACILITIES: Fulton Practice Space (ensemble rooms); Morrison-Gerard Practice Space, Steiner Practice Space

Brown was the second Ivy-League school on our trip, and the first that is significantly larger than Amherst. This raised some concerns about our tour: should we be comparing our facilities to those of a school with such a large student body? At first, it seems impractical to compare the facilities and programs available for a body of 1,600 with those available to Brown's undergraduate population of around 5,000 students. Amherst cannot (and luckily does not need to) provide the exact same facilities.

Yet, we must be aware of the opportunities offered by Brown as we plan for the future at Amherst. The best students often apply to both schools, and so we should be able to offer classes, facilities, and opportunities similar to Brown's if we are to compete. It was with this attitude that we headed for Providence.

BROWN FACILITIES

The century-old Orwig building, containing the music library, is the main music building on Brown's campus. Hannah Lewis, a senior and library employee, praises its collection as incredibly large and comprehensive. "Everything I've ever wanted, they have multiple copies of," she said. Multiple levels house computers, stacks, and some of the nicest study areas on campus. There is a separate collection of rare and historic music housed across campus in the Hay Library. The rest of the building houses professors' offices, classrooms, and other academic music facilities.



One of the several rooms that make up the Brown Music Library, praised by students for its sizeable collection.

Next door to the Orwig building is the Grant Recital Hall, occupying one wing of the three-part Grant/Fulton/Morrison-Gerard music building. Grant Hall is brand new; Hannah was one of the

first Brown students to give a performance in the new space. The Fulton rehearsal wing was improved along with Grant Hall, creating a new large group rehearsal space. Also attached to this complex is the Morrison-Gerard wing, which provides five practice rooms for students and houses most music lessons. A block away is the Steiner Building, devoted entirely to music practice. On the ground floor, there are thir-



The interior of the renovated performance hall

teen soundproof practice studios. Up one floor is the rehearsal room for the choir, and the top floor of the building houses the electronic music studio. Hannah attested that she has not had much problem finding space to practice.

There are plenty of performance spaces on Brown's campus outside of the music facilities. The theater building houses the Stewart Theater and the Leeds Theater, versatile spaces that host all types of productions. Large campus groups often perform in historic Sales Hall, and the orchestra practices in Alumni Hall. T. F. Green Hall has numerous practice and informal performance spaces available to students, which are often used for impromptu coffee-house type concerts.

PERFORMANCE SCENE

Brown offers an amazing array of performance opportunities. The music department sponsors an orchestra, choir, wind ensemble, and jazz band, and also helps with the many student-run arts groups on campus.

Students run the Brown New Music Ensemble, and recently founded a student opera group. A Gilbert and Sullivan society produces a show each semester, and there are thirteen *a cappella* groups. Like at Amherst, all of these groups thrive on participation by non-majors and are completely independent of the music department. Yet, in contrast to our situation, the Brown groups receive funding from other sources and are thus not on their own financially.

The campus boasts an overwhelming array of musical theater offerings. The Student Production Workshop produces 4-5 plays per semester in a theater completely owned and operated by undergraduates. Alex Bachorik, a freshman with an interest in extracurricular music, told us that she had attended three student-run theatrical productions in the past three weeks, and that such a string of performances was nothing remarkable. Academic departments are involved in productions as well. The theater department produces eight faculty-directed and student-performed shows a year, one of which is usually a musical. This year's musical was Stephen



Student theater at Brown has a long history- this poster for a student production dates to 1908.

Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along*. The composer personally selected Brown as the location for the revival because of the school's great theatrical reputation. Student initiative has created an incredibly diverse array of student productions and performances that Brown is very happy to support with funding and facilities.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Like Bowdoin, Brown just underwent a major upgrade of its music facilities. However, this has not stopped the administration from continuing to improve arts offerings. One of the college's shortcomings, the lack of a large concert hall, is universally acknowledged by the administration, and only the difficulty of expansion in Brown's dense surroundings has stymied attempts to erect a new hall. "The university recognizes that they must provide a home for all the music on campus," explained Alex.



Alumni Hall, home to orchestra rehearsals, concerts, and occasional ballroom dancing lessons.

As dazzling as the opportunities that Hannah and Alex described are, we realize that an attempt to offer a similar array of choices at Amherst would be impossible. Our six *a cappella* groups are plenty for a school of Amherst's size, and there are simply not enough students to fill a cast and an audience for dozens of shows per semester. Yet, the match between the music scene on campus and the facilities and funding available should be a model for Amherst's future plans. We do not need dozens of performance halls and student clubs for performances that Amherst cannot support, but we do need to make sure that when dedicated students need room to perform, or funding and venues for their projects, Amherst can provide them. Our small college will never offer the same music scene as Brown, but we must prove that we are willing to show the same investment in the arts and our dedicated student musicians.

YALE UNIVERSITY



MAIN FACILITIES: 34 Elm Street, Harkness Hall

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES: Sprague Hall, Hendrie Hall (Graduate School), Gilmore Library

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Woolsey Hall (1000+ seats), Sprague Hall (250 seats), Sudler Hall (100 seats)

MAJORS PER CLASS: 30

As a 5,000 undergraduate, urban research institution with a world-class music graduate school, Yale University provides the biggest contrast with Amherst College of all of the schools on our tour. But Yale courts the same motivated, highly intelligent students that Amherst does, so it is important to understand the options available to these students as we plan for the future of music at Amherst.

YALE FACILITIES

Performance space is everywhere at Yale. “There is plenty of space to perform in for any size [group] imaginable,” explained Professor Patrick McCreless, our host at Yale. The largest space on campus is the historic Woolsey Hall, home to the college’s large orchestral and choral concerts. The state-of-the-art Sprague Hall, renovated in 2005, holds a 250-seat recital hall used almost exclusively by the graduate school. Undergraduates have

access to Sudler Recital hall, which seats about 100 people. Sudler hosts string recitals and small chamber groups, and is “absolutely first-rate, all the way around,” says McCreless. Informal spaces abound on campus too. Each residential college common room has a well-maintained piano, and these spaces often host coffeehouse-type events or *a cappella* concerts. The lobby of the rare books library hosts performances of the university’s early music ensemble. Theaters in New Haven also host major concerts and dramatic events.



The 100-seat Sudler Recital Hall. Professor McCreless praised the recently renovated space as “absolutely first-rate.”

Practice rooms at Yale are concentrated in Hendrie Hall, home to the University’s School of

Music. The undergraduate Department of Music and graduate School of Music are almost completely separate; they have different faculty and use different buildings. Some overlap exists though, and the most prominent example is Yale’s Gilmore Music Library. This

brand new space houses what McCreless praises as one of the two or three best libraries in the country, and its contents are available to graduates and undergraduates alike. A few seminar rooms in the library are also open to both the school and the department, but most undergraduate music classrooms are in the restored Harkness Hall.



A seminar room shared by the School and Department.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Major changes are planned for Yale's music facilities. In addition to the complete renovation of performance halls, both the Department of Music and the School of Music are slated to get new homes in the next few years. McCreless walked us past the construction on Stoeckel Hall, a historic building that will house a brand new music department facility in 2009. Hendrie Hall, home to part of the Graduate school and a few undergraduate practice areas, will get a complete renovation in the next five years.

Professor McCreless admitted that Yale suffers from a lack of practice space, which can hurt individual students or a *cappella* groups looking to rehearse. But the construction on new and planned buildings all across Yale's campus is evidence of an



Stoeckel Hall, currently undergoing renovations, will replace the Elm Street building in 2009, and become one of several brand new music facilities on campus.



A music classroom in Harkness Hall

administration that is very willing to spend money to ensure that the school has first-rate music facilities. McCreless praised the administration as incredibly attentive to the needs of the undergraduate department. The lack of practice space is an acknowledged problem and more space is actively being sought.

Aside from the lack of individual practice space, the music situation at Yale is entirely positive. Because of the strong separation between the undergraduate and graduate programs, the excellence of the undergraduate music scene is due almost entirely to investment in undergraduate music. While undergraduates do benefit from the new library and occasional graduate practice space, their resources are stunning mainly because the undergraduate facilities at Yale get just as much attention as the ones in the graduate School of Music.

As an institution devoted entirely to undergraduate education, Amherst should realize the importance of this attention to facilities for non-graduate students. While we cannot assemble a music library that is among the best in the world or provide students with a 100-year-old concert hall, it is certainly within our means to develop and maintain facilities that support the dedicated music faculty and students at our college. Though the Amherst department is considerably smaller, the college's investment in music should be just as vigorous as Yale's. Students should not have to choose between the intimate class size and professor relationships of Amherst and the stellar facilities of Yale; it is within our power to provide both.



Photo Credit: SBRA.com

The new Gilmore Music Library is integrated in Yale's main library. Its world-class collection is shared by undergraduates and graduate students.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY



MAIN FACILITY: Center for the Arts, 1973

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Crowell Hall (400 seats), World Music Hall (150 seats), '92 Theater (100 seats), Memorial Chapel, CFA Theater

MAJORS PER CLASS: 8

FULL-TIME FACULTY: 16

WESLEYAN FACILITIES

Wesleyan's arts facility is comprised of several buildings collectively known as the Center for the Arts. One of these buildings houses the academic music facilities, as well as instrument storage. Jon Short, a sophomore, praised the practice facilities on the lower level of the building, saying that it is very rare to have to wait for a practice room. The individual rooms are completely soundproofed. Larger rehearsal areas are spread around campus.

In a separate CFA building is the World Music Hall, home to the university's Gamalan, an enormous southeast Asian instrument. Despite its name, the hall also hosts *a cappella* and other concerts with no ethnomusicological focus. An underground rehearsal hall holds large seminars and choral rehearsals, and the CFA also has a recording studio. The Crowell Concert Hall, the largest on campus, can hold large ensembles and equally large audiences. The

building was once a concrete, acoustically difficult space much like Buckley, but wood panels added to the hall in the last five years have transformed it into a space that is much more acoustically attuned for musical performance.

The '92 Theater is a student-run theater that seats up to 100 people. On the day of our visit, student technicians were hard at work despite it being the middle of spring break. Nearby is Memorial Chapel, also home to frequent musical performances.



Crowell Concert Hall in the CFA. The wooden panels are recent additions to the hall that make it not only more attractive, but also much more acoustically attuned for musical performances.

PERFORMANCE SCENE

Performances at Wesleyan are very frequent, both by students and visiting professionals. The CFA produces an annual booklet detailing the arts offerings of the facility, which amount to more than 275 annually.

There are nine *a cappella* groups on campus, as well as a gospel choir, traditional choir, orchestra, early music group, and “any number of student bands,” said Short.



The choral room in the CFA is also used for film screenings and as a large classroom. The recording studio is right next door.

Additionally, many performance opportunities are offered through the department. An opera class is offered each semester; the most recent one performed Act II of *Die Fledermaus*. The department offers classes in an amazing array of music, including lessons in Balinese, Japanese, and Javanese instruments. Incredibly, the CFA has rooms specifically designed for and devoted to the practice of these instruments.



Students at work on and independent production in the '92 theater.

The theater department sponsors two shows a year, one of which can be a musical. The music department sometimes produces musicals as well, which go up in the school's main theater. The '92 theater also contributes to the performance scene on campus, and does so independently of any academic department.



World Music Hall, with Wesleyan's gamelan. The hall hosts all types of concerts, not just ethnomusical ones.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Wesleyan's campus center, currently being renovated, will house additional practice space as well as a new performance hall. This new construction will certainly add to the student performance scene on campus by creating halls independent of the arts departments. Changes are in place for the CFA as well. Professor Sumarsam,

our host, shared plans for renovations to the World Music Hall to fix the drone of an air conditioner. When we entered the hall, the noise was barely audible, but the interference of the HVAC unit was still important enough to Wesleyan to invest considerable money in its repair to improve the acoustics of the hall. Also planned in the next five years is a World Music Museum which, though it will not add to practice or performance space, will help to solidify Wesleyan's position as one of the top schools in the country for the study of ethnomusicology.



The Wesleyan Chapel interior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from our trip last March confirmed the belief of those familiar with the Arms Center that Amherst's music building is far behind those of other schools. The building itself is inadequate in many ways, but the problem extends beyond just the facility itself. Other schools can offer far more in the way of performance and dramatic music opportunities because they have the comprehensive facility, performance halls, and practice space that a vibrant arts scene requires. The number of majors per class is higher at Amherst than at every school of a similar size, yet these majors must use facilities that are less advanced and more limited than those other schools provide for a smaller number of majors. Finally, Amherst is alone among the schools we visited in that it can advertise neither a recent major investment in its music facilities nor a planned renovation or new construction project to improve its building. This final problem is the most obvious to student musicians visiting Amherst and thinking of applying.

Though our trip exposed Arms' shortcomings, it also illuminated some of its comparative strengths. The choral and instrumental rooms in the building were, aesthetically, some of the nicest anywhere. The wood flooring, natural light, and high ceilings are rare among other schools, and Professor Wells of Williams College told us that he looked at our choral room "with a bit of envy." Though neither room is soundproof, the 1967 investment in these aesthetic aspects of the rooms is still paying off.

The visiting artists brought to campus for the Music at Amherst series are also first-rate. We noticed several other schools were hosting artists who had performed at Amherst, while some schools had less serious concert series and some had none at all. Though most other colleges produced longer and flashier publications about their concerts, the performers themselves are as good at Amherst as they are anywhere.

Though Amherst's musical theater offerings are limited to the one production over interterm, the quality of the production is very high. We did not watch any shows on our visit, but most musical theater activity at other schools was student produced and directed. Amherst brings in professional staff and employs a full orchestra during its annual production, and the musical's rarity also helps to ensure its popularity and high standard of quality.

Student-run musicals will never be possible at Amherst until an adequate venue and sufficient funding become available for groups, but the one production that does happen maintains a very high artistic independent theater standard.

The idea of an atrium is also a positive one, helping to make the entrance of the building inviting and attractive. Patrons do not wait in a cramped lobby before the doors open; they have three-story ceilings above them and plenty of room and windows. There are, however, flaws with Buckley's atrium. Noise travels easily from one end of the building to the other, it takes up space that the growing department desperately needs, and the concrete coffered ceiling is not the most attractive choice. Yet, the concept of the atrium – an open, inviting interior space as the building's main entrance – should be maintained.

The most important aspect of the building is intangible but vital to the success of any new project. When Buckley was designed in the sixties, the process was approached with the attitude that music is important to the liberal-arts experience and should have a great home on campus. The original binder reflects this feeling. Plans like the enormous pipe organ, acoustic panels to make the hall more flexible, and trees growing in the atrium were all eventually scrapped, but show that an effort was made to make Arms a wonderful music facility. Though it is no longer wonderful today, the building went well beyond the needs of the 1960s music department. Any changes to the music building should be done with foresight and with the same great appreciation for music that went into the design of the Arms Center.

Some of the problems described in Section I can be fixed without much cost and within a short time. These short-term fixes should be made as soon as possible to offer current students a better building in which to work. Other problems obviously require long-term planning and larger expenditures, but these long-term projects are needed to keep Amherst competitive in the musical field.

Photo Credit: <http://www.tufts.edu/musiccenter/>



While a scheduling conflict kept us from visiting Tufts, the school has just opened the \$27 million Granoff Music Center. These photos, from Tuft's website, illustrate the spectacular new space.

SHORT-TERM FIXES

There are several glass listening rooms on the top floor of the Arms Center that sit largely unused, since listening is usually done on personal computers instead of the LP players still in the rooms. **The college should convert these spaces into practice rooms**, which, as explained earlier, are far too scarce. The glass walls should be replaced to block sound, and pianos should be purchased to make the rooms usable for theory, voice, and piano students, but the addition of these rooms to Arms' current fourteen will only help to alleviate the space crunch temporarily.

Soundproofing important parts of the building will make it immediately more useful to students and faculty. Choral and instrumental rooms should be upgraded so that rehearsals in each room do not disturb each other or bleed into the atrium and library. Practice rooms should be soundproofed to allow musicians to practice undisturbed by their peers. Finally, the Hall and the Morgan Library would benefit from soundproofing to minimize acoustic disruption.

Electronic music is a new and quickly developing area of college-level music study, but our studio was never designed to support study in this field. We recommend **finding an adequate space for the electronic music studio**, and making sure that its equipment, staffing, and funding can offer students cutting-edge classes in the field. If Arms does not have room for a larger studio, some other schools have temporarily housed their studios off-site in nearby buildings. This approach, while imperfect, is preferable to continued use of the weak current studio.



Photo Credit: <http://www.tufts.edu/musiccenter/>

The Lilly Music Library inside the Granoff Center

LONGER-TERM FIXES

Until a new hall is built, Buckley will continue to have to host many operas and musical theater productions. As the recent dangerous fall in Buckley shows, converting the space to a theatrical setting has many financial, technical, and safety problems. **Install a lighting rig** in the hall not only to make lighting safer, but also to give directors more options in a constricting and sub-par space.



Photo Credit: <http://www.tufts.edu/musiccenter/>

There is also no space for an orchestra during operatic and theatrical productions. Its space between the stage and audience blocks views and ruins the sound balance. **Dig a pit below the stage** with enough room for the orchestra to play comfortably. Such a renovation is possible: the area where the pit would go is now a storage space below the hall.

Bathrooms and the back row of the recital hall are the only parts of the building accessible by wheelchair. **Make the Arms Center handicapped-accessible** out of fairness to all of those who use the building, to avoid any legal action, and to live up to Amherst's professed commitment to diversity of all types.

Begin a complete overhaul and expansion of the college's music facilities. The Arms Center can be renovated to become more bearable in the coming years, but the changes listed above are merely band-aids. None will make the recital hall or the entire building adequate for a growing student body or the innovations of the future. Whether this project takes the form of a comprehensive overhaul and renovation of the current building or construction of a completely new facility is up to the architects, but anything short of a major project will be ineffective. Our peer institutions already have facilities or plans for facilities that will outperform the Arms Center even with all of the above improvements. Amherst students need more and more varied practice and performance spaces that Arms will never have. Orchestras, choirs, chamber performances, operas, and thesis recital students cannot perform in the same hall forever, and these student performers deserve spaces designed for their very different crafts.

The needs of Amherst music students have outgrown the capacity of the Arms Center, and the needs of high school music students will also continue to grow. As college applicants become savvier and as the college-age population shrinks, Buckley's shortcomings will be an even greater liability to the entire college. Amherst must begin planning now to bring its musical facilities up to and beyond the standards set by its peer institutions. We can build a great home for music and performing arts at Amherst, and that process can begin today.