

“A Longstanding Commitment to the Arts and Humanities:  
The New West Wing of the Lee Norvelle Theatre and Drama Center”

Dedication of New and Renovated Theatre and Drama Facilities

Remarks for Michael A. McRobbie  
President  
Indiana University  
Wells-Metz Theatre  
Lee Norvelle Theatre and Drama Center  
IU Bloomington  
Friday, June 17, 2011

1. INDIANA UNIVERSITY'S FINE ARTS PLAZA

Fifty years ago at the dedication of Showalter Fountain, IU's legendary 11<sup>th</sup> President Herman B Wells celebrated the completion of what he called IU's Fine Arts Plaza. He said, “Indiana University has long been outstanding in the sciences and in the professions. Yet it remembers its ancient foundation upon the classics. Today in dedicating this magnificent fountain with its central figure the goddess of love, truth, and beauty, we proudly reaffirm our belief in the importance of the arts and the life of the spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

That celebration did not end in 1961.

The successful renovation project that we are celebrating this evening is the latest in a series of landmark events that have marked the development of the Fine Arts Plaza over the years. In 1960, the Lilly Library was completed, and in 1962 the Fine Arts

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, Herman B. Remarks Delivered at Dedication of Showalter Fountain. Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana. 22 Oct. 1961.

Building. In 1979, the IU Art Museum was completed, designed by the world renowned architect I.M. Pei. In 2002, the Lee Norvelle Theatre and Drama Center added another chapter to the life of this great plaza, and earlier this year, we dedicated the new IU Cinema. This afternoon the celebration continues in the newly renovated west wing of the Lee Norvelle Theatre and Drama Center.

## 2. TRAINING GROUND FOR TALENT

This wonderful new facility draws on the long and illustrious history of IU's Department of Theatre and Drama in the College of Arts and Sciences as a training ground for talent.

IU Theatre and Drama students have studied under the tutelage of award-winning performers. They have helped stage the great Greek classical comedies and tragedies of Aristophanes, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus, modern works by the likes of Neil Simon and Arthur Miller, along with the immortal works of Shakespeare. And, as you all know, those students have gone on to lead distinguished careers in the many and varied realms associated with stage and screen.

There is Charles Kimbrough, who was in the original Broadway production of Stephen Sondheim's *Company* and *Sunday in the Park with George* but is probably best known for his role in *Murphy Brown*. And Patricia Kalember, who has had roles on the NBC drama *Sisters*, the 1980s television show *Thirtysomething*, and more recently on *Law and Order: SVU*. And the late lyricist Howard Ashman, who worked with composer Alan Menken on the music for a number of Disney films. And character actor Andrew Duggan, who appeared in seventy movies and over one-hundred-and-forty television shows in the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. And Arian Moayed, who is starring on Broadway in *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. And Broadway actors Nicole Parker, Happy Anderson, Colin Donnell, Rebecca Faulkenberry, and Elizabeth Stanley. And playwright Emily Schwartz, author and playwright Joseph Hayes, scenic designer Karl Eigsti,

director, producer, actor, and teacher Dan Bonnell, Oscar-winning actor Kevin Kline . . . , and of course, I could go on.

The innovative facility we are celebrating today will help build upon this outstanding tradition of teaching, performance, and achievement.

### 3. NO ORDINARY STRUCTURE

Of course, this is no ordinary structure.

Essentially, it is a building within a building that includes a black box theatre, which you may see during the reception after the ceremony, a movement studio on the second floor of the renovated space, as well as classrooms and offices space. This is a building worthy of the ambitions and dreams that our outstanding students and faculty bring to it.

### 4. NO ORDINARY HISTORY

And this building has no ordinary history.

As many of you know, this extensive renovation was originally envisioned as part of the construction of the Lee Norvelle Theatre and Drama Center, but at the time, this was not possible to accomplish. When I was named president in 2007, I toured this space, and the word wretched came to mind.

It is testimony to the creativity and dedication of our faculty and staff members in Theatre and Drama that they were able to transform much of this space into serviceable teaching spaces, but serviceable is certainly not ideal. I believed it was essential to prioritize this project and find the resources to see it achieved.

It was a great pleasure to watch it develop under the capable leadership of Jonathan, Rob Shakespeare, George Pinney, and other members of the Theatre and Drama faculty. Thanks also go to Tom Morrison, Vice President for Capital Projects and Facilities, for the important role he has played in shaping this project.

This space represents years of determination, dedication, and intellectual effort all directed towards strengthening and honoring Indiana University's great traditions in the arts and humanities, traditions that we are proud to share with the entire community.

Such facilities are for the humanist and the artist the equivalent of the laboratories or the supercomputers of the life scientist or the computer scientist.

#### 5. A COMMUNITY RESOURCE FOR EVERY GENERATION

They are also an essential part of the rich cultural heritage of this community and this state. They open a door between the university and the broader community, allowing us to share the remarkable talent of our faculty and students.

Perhaps most important, they represent the depth of the university's commitment to training the next generation of scholars, performers, and artists. This new facility will help nurture their talent and build their dreams.

We all can look forward to the fulfillment of that promise.

Thank you.