



*“In Harmony, Small Things Grow”  
A Home for the Arts & Community*

**Frequently Asked Questions about the Performing Arts Center (PAC)**

**1. Why are we building the Performing Arts Center now?**

Having outgrown our original Wheaton campus, the school was moved to the Olney location and opened its doors to students in January 2007. Although an auditorium was in the original plans, we built the school we could afford at the time, and we were unable to build the Performing Arts Center. The Board of Directors has demonstrated its commitment by making the completion of the PAC a strategic priority, approving the engagement of the architects and endorsing the feasibility study relevant to its completion.

It is clear that our school has students with diverse learning abilities and interests. We are committed to educating the whole person in faith, academics, service, athletics, and the arts.

Construction of the PAC will bring balance to our programming and strengthen our long term viability. We have evidence that the absence of a true performance space has influenced the high school decision for many prospective families. Parents and students see that we often perform in the gym, practice in the hallways, or take our show down the road to perform in rented space. Until we can provide a facility for the performing arts that is consistent with the quality we provide in our classrooms and athletic facilities, we will remain at a competitive disadvantage with respect to our peer schools.

**2. What is the sense of urgency about this project?**

Our entire school community and visiting guests notice that our space is inadequate for the arts when we gather in the gym or dining hall to hear a concert or watch a performance. Our students watch everything we do. We talk about excellence in academics, athletics, and the arts. The students with a passion for the arts recognize that our words have not been matched by a commitment to providing a quality facility for dance, drama, and music performance. Their interests have been a lower priority.

The generosity of many benefactors has helped to create first class spaces for our athletes. Meanwhile, hundreds of students have graduated and hundreds more in school now wait for us to allocate the resources that will demonstrate our commitment to the performing arts and give their interests a home.

Our school is beautiful, and thanks to the hard work and pride of our staff, the building and campus still look like new, both inside and out. Yet, now already into our seventh year on the Olney campus, we still lack a Performing Arts Center.

**3. How will our students benefit from a Performing Arts Center?**

The new facility is a necessity for the Good Counsel student of today.

Our school requires that all students study the arts as a part of their academic program, and as many as one-third of our students are engaged in some type of performing arts activity at any point in time. At present, Good Counsel has no proper facility for rehearsals; performances; costume, prop, or set design and storage. Additionally, we do not have adequate space and proper acoustics for large meetings and lectures.

In fact, the new PAC is expected to be utilized at least 75% of the time during the school year under the current curriculum. In addition to fulfilling the needs for our students involved in the performing arts, this space has enormous administrative utility. It will allow us to seat two grade levels or one gender at a time or the parents of an entire grade for a Mass, assembly, award ceremony, lecture, or guest presentation. It will provide a space for our award-winning speech and debate teams to hold competitions.

Being able to practice in the venue where theater, orchestral, or vocal performances take place is one huge advantage, but, additionally, students interested in the technical side of performance will have the opportunity to learn all aspects of production, including set construction, lighting, and sound. The PAC will showcase the extraordinary talent of our deserving students. It will set the stage to engage students in a wide variety of artistic disciplines. There will finally be a worthy home for students with a zeal for creative expression.

The construction of the Performing Arts Center will speak louder than words about how we feel about the many students who have a passion for the arts. We have already spoken loudly in the classroom and in athletics. Our students will have sustained access to a quality performance space that they can call home.

#### **4. Is the Performing Arts Center for everyone?**

Emphatically, yes! The Performing Arts Center completes the campus, giving every student access to every part of the Good Counsel experience in equal measure. Of course it is for those who perform. It is also for every student involved in set construction, costume design, makeup, sound, lighting -- any of the support functions involved in a high-quality production. It is for musicians, singers, dancers, actors, debaters, speakers, and a variety of other performers. It's for every student taking a required fine arts class, or attending a lecture or performance. And while the clear benefits to students and faculty are first and foremost in our minds, we also recognize that the PAC will finally allow parents and the greater Olney community to come together to celebrate many occasions for the very first time.

#### **5. How often do you envision the auditorium and classrooms will be used on a daily basis?**

We have popular academic offerings in dance, drama, and vocal and instrumental music. More than 200 students are typically involved in the drama productions and more than 120 in music and dance. We have students performing in jazz ensemble, orchestra, band, and several choral groups.

The classroom areas would be used a minimum of 75% of the time, probably more. More than 400 students are enrolled in the 26, full-year performing arts courses – about 1/3 of the student body. During a typical school year, the theatre will offer a minimum of:

- five vocal concerts
- seven instrumental concerts
- one full drama production and one full musical (six performances each, plus rehearsals)
- two IB Theater class performances plus rehearsals
- two dance recitals
- faculty and staff monthly meetings
- assemblies at least two times each month

**6. Why will it cost so much to build this facility?**

The Performing Arts Center is projected at \$10 million.

The new design provides for not only a beautiful theatre to seat half the student body and half the faculty at any time, but also the orchestra pit, set design, costume and prop construction and storage, dressing rooms, a dance studio, blackbox theatre, and instructional spaces to support a growing educational program in the arts. The design requires excavation below the stage, construction above, and the infrastructure to connect these spaces to the performance chamber.

The 2005 design was most often quoted as being in the +/- \$4 million range. Eight years have passed since the original design was conceived, and that design was primarily an auditorium with a stage and little infrastructure to support a comprehensive performing arts program.

**7. Why do we need this space when there are other theaters nearby?**

We are grateful to Sandy Springs Friends School for renting us their theatre space several times a year. Some years ago, we rented space at the Olney Theater. Not only can we not count on these spaces being available for rent, but also neither theater is ours for the everyday use we envision for a comprehensive educational program in the performing arts. In addition, rental costs for use of external spaces continue to increase.

**8. Are the arts just as important as academics, athletics, and service?**

Every student comes to Good Counsel with different gifts. And every prospective student looks at Good Counsel with different needs. Construction of the Performing Arts Center will bring balance to the school's educational offerings to ensure that every student can achieve his or her potential.

The addition of a true Performing Arts Center to our beautiful campus will fulfill our commitment to provide the very best Catholic, college-preparatory education with the most advanced facilities and equipment, ensuring the best outcome for **every** student who becomes part of our community. It is a challenge that our community should embrace. And it will, at last, give the arts their proper balance beside faith, academics, athletics, and service as cornerstones of the educational experience.

All our students deserve this home for the arts.

**9. When will construction begin?**

It depends upon these three factors: (1) continuation of the progress on fundraising; (2) refinancing of the School's existing bond debt combined with a shorter-term bridge loan that will cover the lag between disbursements for construction and the inflow of pledge payments; (3) getting regulatory planning approval and securing the permits for construction. This last factor is potentially the most likely to influence when a shovel goes in the ground. If everything comes together, the shovel could go in the ground in the fall of 2014. We expect construction to take 15 months.

**10. What happens if we don't raise the entire \$10 million?**

The Board of Directors is deeply committed to this project. At a special meeting in October 2013, the Board reaffirmed its commitment by releasing the architect to proceed to final, permit-ready design drawings. The need for the Performing Arts Center is urgent, and it is not more than our students deserve. Our plan is that we will and must continue fundraising until we get this project paid for. We believe that our community will invest in this project to ensure our success.