

Hill Auditorium The University of Michigan Ann Arbor

Scott Pfeiffer as Senior Consultant for Kirkegaard Associates

Designed by Albert Kahn with acoustics by Hugh Tallant, the Hill auditorium uniquely used its ceiling as an acoustic amplifier to allow a lecturer on stage to address an audience of 4,000 without a microphone. This rotated paraboloid similarly makes a soloist on stage larger-than-life with an impact more similar to venues 1/3 of its size. The applause of the audience was equally magnified back to the stage, making Hill an instant favorite for even the most well-traveled performer.

Dedicated in 1913, Hill had been maintained with no comprehensive renovation in nearly 90 years. The original decorative painting and strings of lights in the ceiling were painted out in a monochromatic scheme, and ad hoc accommodations for lighting, rigging, and audio distracted from the grandeur of the original design. The original wooden chairs were replaced with over-stuffed movie-theater style seats. Acoustic absorption on the rear walls that was critical to hearing conditions on stage was painted over, and aging mechanical systems introduced into the basement added significant noise to the auditorium.

Fears of losing the legendary acoustics of Hill Auditorium were high on the minds of the University and all of the producing organizations. Design challenges of providing improved separation from the lobby needed to overcome concerns of losing a coupled-volume effect from the reverberant stair wells and lobbies.

The combination of reduced background noise, separation from distractions in the lobby and outside world, improved on-stage conditions, stunningly restored visual aesthetic, increased comfort, and improved technological capabilities have made Hill Auditorium even more rewarding for audiences and performers alike.

<i>Client:</i>	<i>The University of Michigan</i>
<i>Tenants:</i>	<i>University Productions University Music Society</i>
<i>Architects:</i>	<i>Albert Kahn Associates, Inc. Quinn Evans Architects</i>
<i>Theatre Consultant:</i>	<i>Fisher Dachs Associates</i>
<i>Acoustics Consultant:</i>	<i>Kirkegaard Associates</i>
<i>Lighting Design:</i>	<i>Gary Steffy Lighting Design, Inc.</i>
<i>Photo provided by:</i>	<i>Quinn Evans Architects</i>

