

## Zankel Music Center recognized for excellence in design



**The Arthur Zankel Music Center**

The American Institute of Architects has honored Skidmore College's new Arthur Zankel Music Center with a 2010 Merit Award for "achievement of excellence in architectural design" for built work.

At a ceremony Nov. 12 in the Philip Johnson-designed Bolton Theater of the Cleveland Playhouse, an international team of architects presented the award to EwingCole of Philadelphia in association with Belson Design Architects of Cleveland. Charles Belson, principal-in-charge, accepted the award, along with project manager Ryan McNutt and interior designer Adam Yaracs, on behalf of the architectural design team that also included project designer Tom Appelquist, acoustician Jerry Marshall and theater consultant Robert Davis.

Jury Chair Donald Schmitt, of Diamond+Schmitt Architects of Toronto, praised the design team for the "complex" exterior of the Zankel Music Center and for the way its design "carefully articulated the separate functions within." The jury found particularly impressive the way Zankel's lobby separates the concert hall wing from the academic wing, while creating external space for "an inviting outdoor amphitheater that appears to attract both large and small groups of students." The jury also called the interior of the concert hall "remarkably beautiful," and its glass wall a "dramatic presence" that gives audiences woodland views that are "striking both day and night."

This was the second AIA Design Award for the Zankel Music Center. The project was awarded a 2003 Honorable Mention for unbuilt work, based on an awards submission that included schematic drawings, plans, perspectives, and models.

"We're delighted that the AIA has honored this extraordinary building and the extraordinary team that designed it," said Michael West, vice president for finance and administration. "As all who have had the opportunity to attend an event in Zankel's Ladd Hall know, EwingCole and Belson Design Architects have given Skidmore and Saratoga Springs an architectural and cultural gem. We appreciate deeply the spirit of creative collaborative the design team brought to this project. They were determined to get every detail right – and they did."

After Skidmore received a \$46 million bequest from the estate of the late financier and Skidmore board member Arthur Zankel, construction documents for bidding were begun in 2006. MLB Construction Managers completed their work in January, 2010, and the building opened in February with a concert by Ensemble ACJW, featuring musicians of The Academy, a program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and The Weill Music Institute in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. The building was dedicated October 16 with a concert that featured renowned pianist Emanuel Ax with Ensemble ACJW and the Skidmore Orchestra.

The acoustics of the concert hall have received only raves since opening night. With a 50-foot ceiling, the hall is exceptionally spacious, enabling sound to reverberate for about two seconds when the hall is fully occupied. That's longer than Boston Symphony Hall's 1.9 seconds, and a good deal longer than the typical 600-seat hall.