

Twenty Years of Music Making

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It is said that good things come in small packages. So it is, at least in this instance, with concert venues. Spivey Hall on the campus of Clayton State University in Morrow, Georgia, just south of Atlanta, opened its doors twenty years ago this past January. Though it seats but 400, it continues, in the words of the University's President, Dr. Tim Hynes, "to hold a special place in the musical lives of tens of thousands of people." Let it be said that much of the hall's success can be ascribed to the vision of the late Emilie Spivey, the benefactress after whom the hall is named, and the stewardship of the hall's Executive and Artistic Directors, Sherryl Nelson and Samuel Dixon. The consistently high standard of musical experiences is perhaps best summed up by these quotes:

"First impressions are exceedingly encouraging. Music has a tangible presence: rich in overtones, vibrant, yet clear." *Derrick Henry, Atlanta Journal/Constitution, January 1991, following the inaugural recital featuring violinist Itzhak Perlman.*

"It is impossible to imagine a small concert hall of greater beauty, comfort and acoustic excellence. ...as near perfection as mere mortals can attain." *Geoffrey Crankshaw in Musical Opinion (UK), July 1992, following the dedication in May of that year of the Albert Schweitzer Memorial Organ.*

"Spivey Hall is to music what light is to painting." *This timeless quote by the late Robert Shaw appeared in a commemorative publication celebrating the hall's First Five Years (1991-1996).*

"Just 10 years old, Spivey Hall, in suburban Atlanta, has earned a reputation as one of the best new halls in America—a reputation, says Ara Guzelimian, artistic advisor to Carnegie Hall, 'that's out of all proportion to its size and location'." *BBC Music Magazine, February 2001.*

"My sincerest compliments on the sensational quality of your hall. I have rarely heard a recital in such surroundings—certainly better than the Brahms Saal at the Musikverein in Vienna or (London's) Wigmore Hall." *Mathew Epstein, artist manager, New York, in a February 2006 note to Sherryl Nelson.*

And the success continues. The upcoming 21st season of concerts will feature, among others, a recital by Dame Gillian Weir, who 20 years prior was invited to inaugurate the hall's stunning Ruffatti-built organ. With no small measure of pride, Sam Dixon, the current director of the hall, concedes that the patrons say it best: "Consistently excellent artists and programs. Just a lovely place to hear music. Amazing sound and hospitality." Can it get any better?