

Brick

IN ARCHITECTURE

VOLUME 56

NUMBER 3

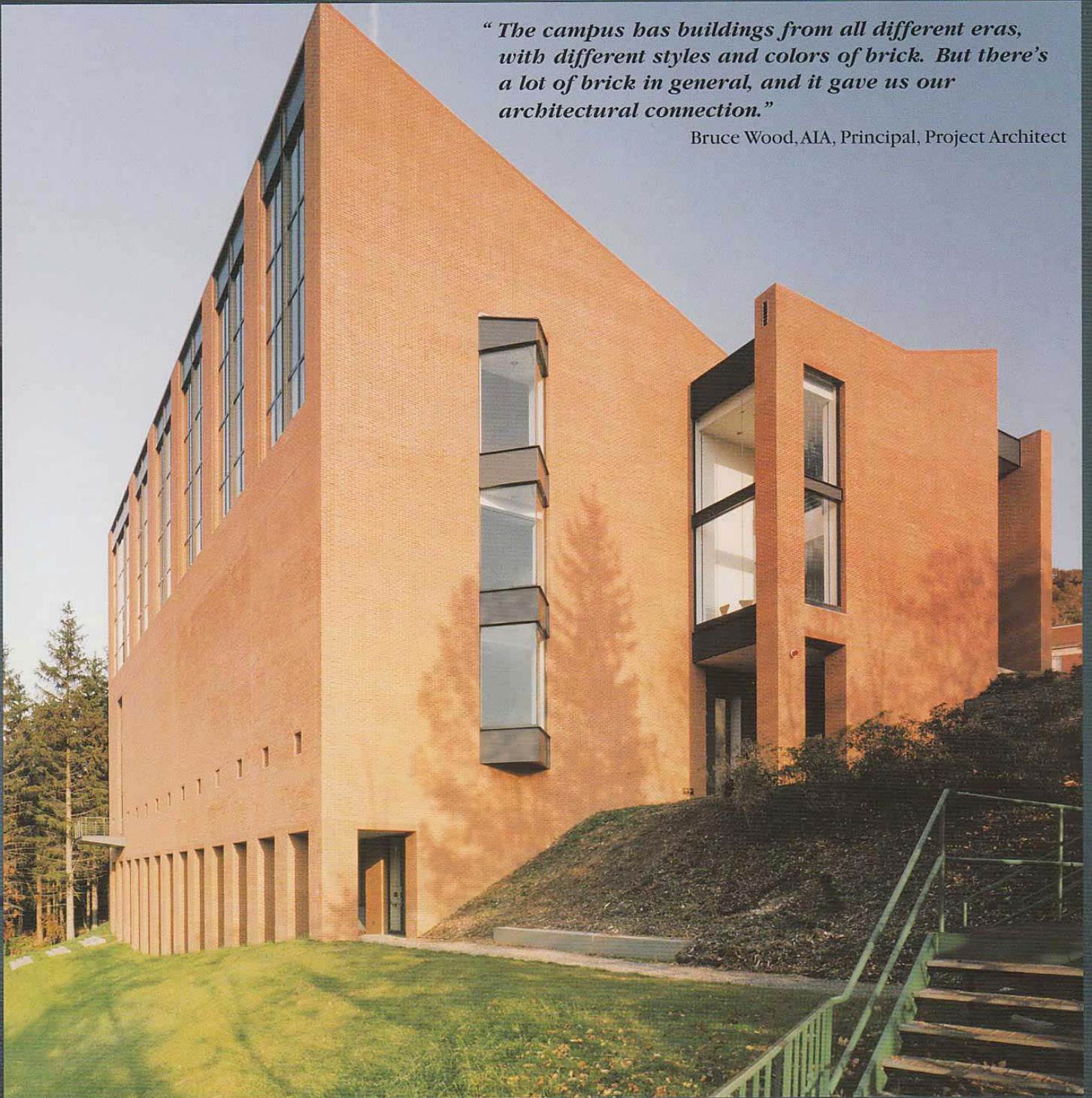


Brick Takes Center Stage

Miller Performing Arts Center
Alfred University
Alfred, New York

“The campus has buildings from all different eras, with different styles and colors of brick. But there’s a lot of brick in general, and it gave us our architectural connection.”

Bruce Wood, AIA, Principal, Project Architect



IN THIS ISSUE

Three new venues for the performing arts—one in Alfred, New York, one in Madison, New Jersey and one in Newark, New Jersey.

Architectural Firm: **Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects**
Boston, Massachusetts

Photographer: **©Peter Vanderwarker**



“We wanted people to point to our building and say ‘performing arts,’” says Bruce Wood, Project Architect for the new Miller Performing Arts Center at Alfred University. The school needed a single building which could house the popular dance, music and theatre programs that were currently occupying separate and rapidly deteriorating spaces on the campus.

The new building is at the edge of campus, at the end of a street which drops steeply away into a valley. Driving into Alfred on the other side of the valley, the site is very prominent. Wood and his team let this geography drive the design, thinking of the building in terms of a “street” side and a “valley” side.

On the street side, the building presents a modest two story appearance, and stays comfortably in scale with other nearby campus buildings. On the valley side, the roofline angles up dramatically as the rest of the structure spills down the slope to establish a macro-scale five-story presence. Tall windows on top and long lean columns on the bottom accentuate the elevation’s verticality.

Internally, big spaces, like dance studios and music rehearsal rooms, are readily visible through the large windows on the valley side. Small spaces, such as



individual practice rooms and design studios, are in the windowed rooms of the street side arcade. The mass at the center is a 55-foot square theatre that seats 250 people.

Alfred is a “brick town.” It and the school were created by the state of New York to provide clay tile and brick manufacturing technology, so the new building fits comfortably. The architect relates the building specifically to campus by using exterior brick light-orange in color, a color similar to other buildings visible on the slope.

“We wanted something expressive,” says Wood. At a school known for its fine arts and ceramics curriculum, the new performing arts building has rapidly become a campus landmark.

**F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre
for the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey**

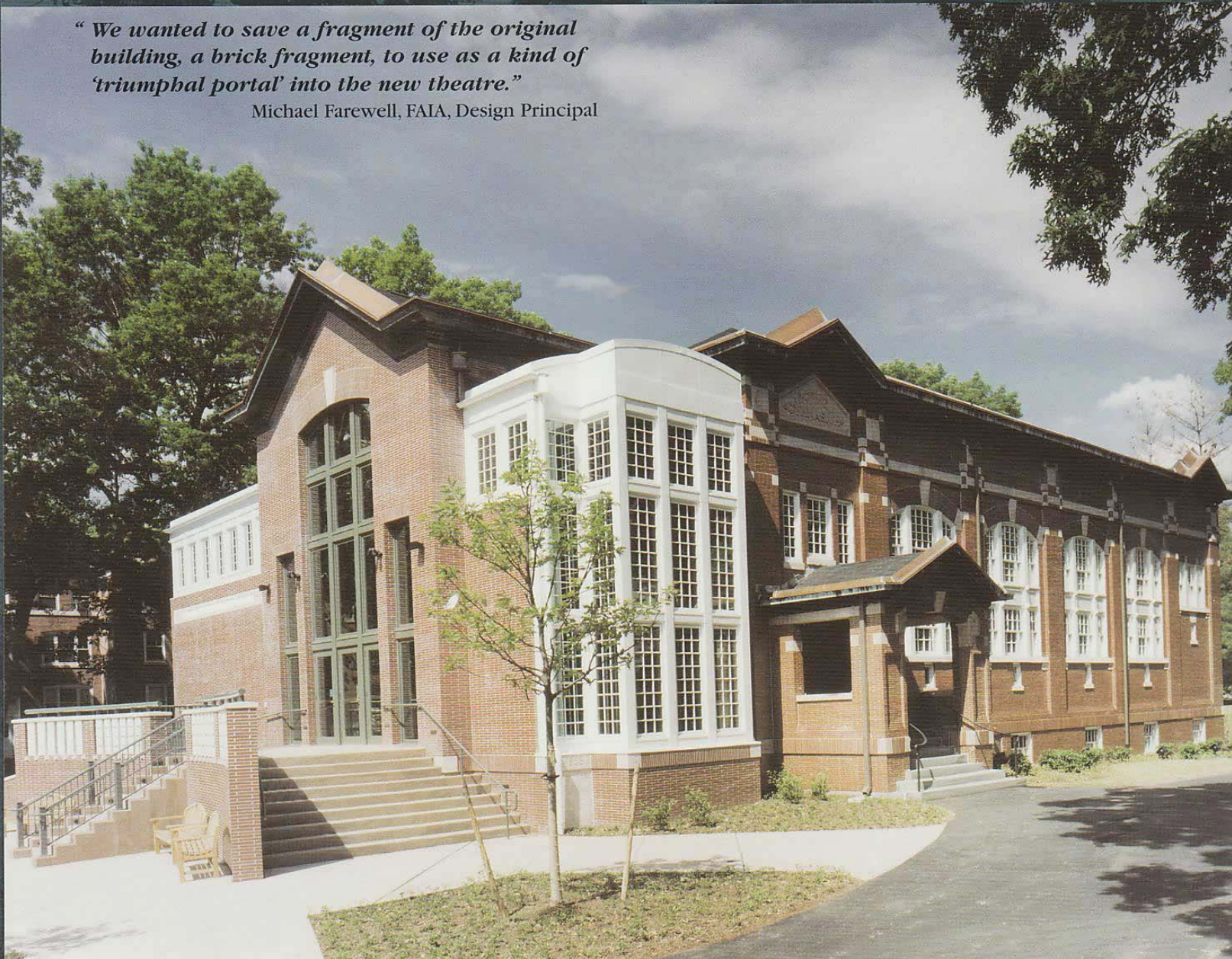
The New Jersey Shakespeare Festival has always enjoyed the support of Drew University and staged its productions on campus in a converted, turn-of-the-century gymnasium. Even with the old running track still in place, it was always a very functional, if not wholly dedicated, theatre. But when the Festival was beginning to outgrow the old gym and needed more seating, a more up-to-date stage and better stage support spaces, something had to be done. "We looked at other sites on campus," says Michael Farewell, Design Principal for the new F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre. "But in the end the idea of adding on, preserving and adapting this great old building was very appealing to everyone."

The design solution is an L-shaped addition that adds width and length to the building, along with a total reconstruction of the interior. Seating capacity is generously increased. The actors get new dressing rooms and a new rehearsal space. There's a grand lobby now, plus a box office and a board-meeting room. The stage is also new, with improved sight-lines and acoustics.

Preserving as much of the old historic building as possible was important. Bracketing the building with an L-shaped addition leaves two of the existing exterior walls intact. Additionally, the original brick East facade is now part of the lobby and has been reused as an entrance into the theatre.

"We wanted to save a fragment of the original building, a brick fragment, to use as a kind of 'triumphal portal' into the new theatre."

Michael Farewell, FAIA, Design Principal



Architectural Firm: **Ford Farewell Mills and Gatsch, Architects**
Princeton, New Jersey

Photographers: ©Steve Wolfe ©Chuck Choi

The new building picks up stylistic cues from the old building. The Roman style brick is very close in dimension to the original, but slightly darker in color, creating some minor contrast between old and new. More dramatic contrast is achieved by using the brick exterior as a kind of plane, a simplified surface, and setting the white wood-framed bay-like window of the lobby against it.

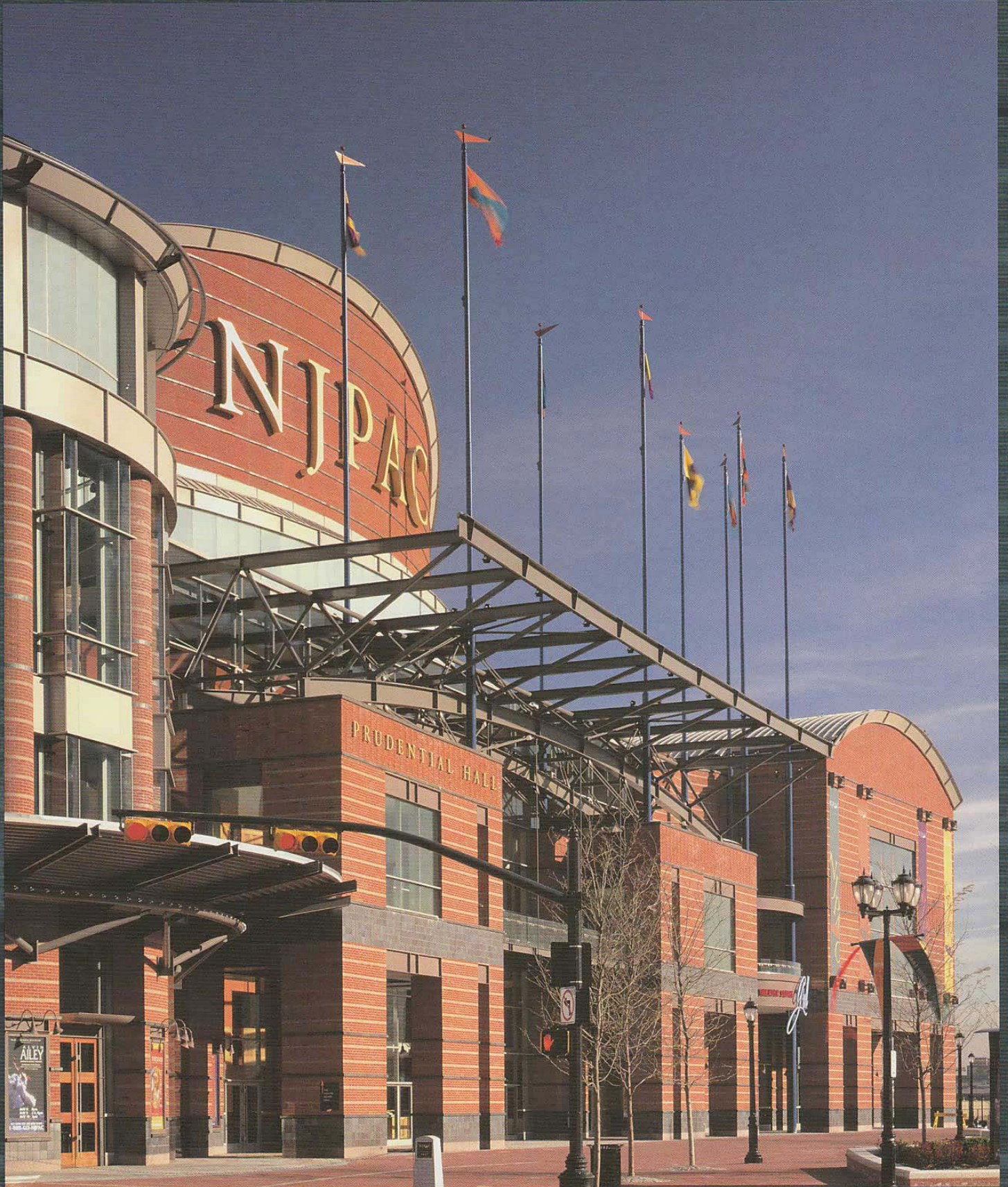
The courtyard is Farewell's strongest device for making the connection between building, campus and intent. "We reoriented the entry to the center of campus and built a courtyard, which is used for receptions and intermissions. The courtyard is a campus space. It connects to campus walks. But it's also a theatre space, a theatrical space."



New Jersey Performing Arts Center
Newark, New Jersey

Architectural Firm: **Barton Myers Associates, Inc.**
Beverly Hills, California

Photographer: **©Jeff Goldberg/Esto Photographics**





Half the population of New Jersey, about six million people, live within a 25 mile radius of Newark. Accessing “culture” used to necessarily mean crossing the river into New York. Now there’s an alternative. The New Jersey Performing Arts Center is a project conceived to not only bring culture to New Jersey but to act as a catalyst for this populous area’s revitalization as well.

Newark for the most part missed the great building boom of the 80’s, and what new construction there was had “defensive” characteristics, like skywalk systems, so people wouldn’t have to use the streets. “We knew we didn’t want to do that,” says Barton Myers, Design Principal for the new Center. “We wanted a building that would be an inviting and accessible place. A building that would make passersby say, ‘I want to see what’s going on in there.’”

The Center is as much about the site as about the building. It’s in a plaza, an oval shaped newly built park that connects a famous commons, called Military Park, with the Passaic River. A performance attendee is practically compelled to walk the length of it and take in the unrestricted views of Manhattan.

Newark has also retained its fabric of smaller scale buildings and open spaces. Myers keeps the Center comfortably in scale and accessible by fragmenting its mass, no small feat considering there are big-volume spaces to deal with, such as two theatres, all the requisite stage support space, plus office and retail space. Plenty of big windows and exposed iron latticework contribute to the building’s feeling of transparency, light and warmth.

A red brick exterior, accented with patterns of sandcast, smooth gray and glazed ironspot brick, makes the building a natural fit in old Newark, where most of the buildings are built with brick.

“The Center was a dream of Governor Kane’s,” says Myers. “He was a student in New York, and understood the impact of Lincoln Center on that whole part of New York. He wanted that for Newark, and it seems to be really working. It’s kicking off a lot of interesting projects there.”



“ We found some very beautiful brick and some very good masons. Besides having a wonderful scale and warmth and beauty, brick is very much about craftsmanship.”

Barton Myers, Design Principal



The Brick Industry Association requests outstanding brick projects for possible inclusion in upcoming issues of *Brick in Architecture*.

Please submit photos and a brief description of the project and use of the brick to:



Brick Industry Association
Attn: John Grgurich
11490 Commerce Park Drive
Reston, Virginia 20191
(703) 620-0010
grgurich@bia.org
www.brickinfo.org