HSPVA
Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts

THE DOWNTOWN DEBUT
Welcome to 790 Austin Street!

The dream of a public performing and visual arts high school for Houston began long before my tenure as principal of Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. In 1971, visionary educators built creative spaces in a former synagogue and opened the doors to young artists from all parts of the city of Houston. In 1981, a custom campus was built for HSPVA in Montrose, but the school had outgrown it before the doors even opened! It is not surprising that dreams of another new campus began taking shape soon afterward.

Twenty-five years ago, administrators, teachers, students, parents, alumni, our non-profit partner HSPVA Friends, and community leaders in the business, education, and arts sectors began working together to find the ideal location for a right-sized, state-of-the-art building. Finally, around 2012, our unwavering team of optimists located the perfect site: a downtown block near the Theater District. Seven years later, on January 7, 2019, students arrived at 790 Austin Street for the first day in their new campus!

On behalf of our school community, I have many people to thank for making this beautiful building a reality. Thank you to the HISD administration and Board of Trustees for including Kinder HSPVA in the 2012 Houston Schools Bond and thank you to the voters who made it possible for HISD to modernize dozens of schools across our city. We also owe tremendous thanks to the Kinder Foundation and HSPVA Friends, whose gifts bridged the gap between the Bond funding and the needs of a comprehensive performing and visual arts curriculum. Thank you to our alumni families, led by Chandra Wilson (Theatre ’87), for paying it forward for the benefit of current and future students. Finally, thank you to our downtown neighbors for welcoming us with open arms.

Over the years, our faculty and staff have put in countless hours designing and redesigning the perfect arts school. Under their guidance, the talented architects at Gensler and the detail-oriented team at McCarthy Building Companies, Inc. turned our redesigning the perfect arts school. Under their guidance, the talented architects at Gensler and the detail-oriented team at McCarthy Building Companies, Inc. turned our

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Dr. Allen takes a turn laying bricks in the principal’s office.

Alumni join current and retired faculty on the future Denney stage.

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The heart of campus is the Denney Theatre, named for our school's founder, Ruth Denney. There have been two previous Denney Theatres: one in the original campus housed in the former Temple Beth Israel synagogue in midtown and another in the Montrose campus.

The 800-seat proscenium theatre boasts a fly system that soars five stories above the stage. Below the stage, a generously sized orchestra pit (with automated lift) descends into the first level of the underground parking garage. Whether your tickets are in the orchestra or balcony section, there is not a bad seat in the house!

The Denney Theatre offers state-of-the-art production value for every form of performing arts—the acoustics required for symphony and choral music concerts, the space required for ballet and modern dance recitals, and the theatrical lighting, audio/visual equipment, and rigging needed to deliver the full spectacle of musical theatre.

THE DENNEY THEATRE: THE LEGACY CONTINUES

The Denney Theatre in the Original Campus at 3517 Austin Street, which students and teachers transitioned from the sanctuary of a synagogue into a theatre, beginning in 1971.

The Denney Theatre in the Montrose Campus at 4001 Stanford Street, completed in 1981.
A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

Kinder HSPVA is known as an environment where students experience “creative collisions.” Anyone who has stepped inside our previous campuses has experienced the exciting sights and sounds of dancers, musicians, visual artists, writers, and actors sharing the hallways. At 790 Austin Street, recreating our famously collaborative culture was a top priority.

Study nooks all over campus feature a variety of seating arrangements and laptop connections, plus chalkboards, dry erase walls, and bulletin boards. Some are open so that the sounds of music practiced in the hallways can carry – even from floor to floor, thanks to strategically placed sound wells.

The Commons is the place where everything happens, including Kinder HSPVA’s famous Happenings. Just inside the front door, the Commons acts as a grand lobby, with an iconic staircase modeled after staircases in the previous campuses. The Commons is home to two sculptures by alumnus Patrick Renner ’00 and his team at Flying Carpet Creative: the formal xylem (above left) welcomes guests into the Denney Theatre, while the whimsical lilt (above right) floats overhead to coax guests upstairs.

Connecting the fourth and fifth floors, a second Commons exists just for students and teachers. It is anchored by the library and a long study counter on one side and the outdoor Student Terrace on the other. The Student Terrace gives students an opportunity to soak up the sun and the magic of the downtown skyline, complete with an “HSPVA” steel sculpture suspended above.

Natural light streams in from every angle. As a result, students feel the bustling energy of downtown, and our neighbors enjoy the youthful vibrancy of Kinder HSPVA. In fact, pedestrians can peek right into the colorful costume and scene shops. As the photo above shows, there are also ample interior windows throughout the school, as well as open floor plans within art areas. Perhaps the most dramatic interior view can be seen from benches in the fourth-floor hallway, which overlook the expansive dance studios below!

A state-of-the-art recording studio gives all students equitable access to high-quality recordings of their work. Every music space, dance studio, and theatre has its own A/V system that connects to the Recording Studio. As a result, students can perfect their performances by studying rehearsal footage and submit technically superior audition tapes to colleges, scholarship opportunities, and national competitions.

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COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE
At Kinder HSPVA, students spend most of their time in their studios. In every art area, designated spaces function at the level students need to become masters of their crafts.

VISUAL ARTS:
In the Visual Arts Department, there is a space for every medium. Sculpture studios offer a full suite of equipment and corresponding safety features, including two kilns for ceramics and an art rail crane that allows students to expand the scale of their work to projects weighing up to one ton. There are studios for drawing, painting, collage, textile work, and more, with retractable seating and walls so that the studio always fits the size and scope of an ever-evolving curriculum. But that’s not all – there are also specialty studios for printmaking, digital media, and photography, as well as a dedicated outdoor work area for welding or aerosol painting.

CREATIVE WRITING:
Kinder HSPVA’s youngest art area finally has a dedicated home of its own! The Creative Writing Department is located next to the library. Students step into an open floorplan designed for constant collaboration, filled with bookshelves and comfortable furniture. The department includes three flexible classroom spaces and an office for small group meetings. It also has a digital media studio for students to experiment with new forms of publishing, illustration, and audio or visual recording.

INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL MUSIC:
Kinder HSPVA musicians have access to specialized studios for mariachi, piano, jazz, band, strings, choral music, and music theory. Situated on the top floor of the campus, soaring ceilings work with custom flooring and wall paneling to create the appropriate acoustics for each ensemble. Students also have access to 18 digitally-tunable soundproof practice rooms! All music spaces are outfitted with state-of-the-art A/V systems connected to the Recording Studio.

DANCE:
Dancers have four studios, each with its single most important piece of equipment: sprung dance flooring, which provides safe rehearsal space for hours and hours of movement. Two of the studios are double-height and can be joined together into one supersized space. When merged, these studios can function as a fifth performance venue for the school, with a lighting grid, A/V system, and retractable audience seating. On the ceiling, reinforced eyehooks give dancers the opportunity to study aerial dance!

THEATRE:
To provide instant access to the stages they use most, Kinder HSPVA’s Theatre Department studios are nestled between the Denney Theatre, Black Box Theatre, Studio Theatre, and freight elevator. Performers can rehearse on those stages, or in their very own movement studio on a sprung dance floor. Design and Theatre Technology students spend their days in the Scene Shop, Costume Shop, or Light and Sound Lab.
In addition to the 800-seat Denney Theatre, Kinder HSPVA houses three smaller performance venues and two art galleries.

BLACK BOX THEATRE
The Black Box is the ultimate flex space, designed to transform from top to bottom into whichever time and place each Theatre Department production requires. Seating for 200 guests can be rearranged in any configuration around the room. Student designers and technicians can manage elaborate light plots and set pieces high above the stage from the safety of the tension grid, which allows them to move freely without the restraints of a traditional catwalk system.

ART GALLERIES
With high ceilings, reinforced walls, viewing benches, and professional gallery lighting, the large and small art galleries provide sophisticated settings for Visual Arts students to display their work. The galleries are also outfitted with projection equipment and pedestals to accommodate digital media and sculpture, respectively. An en-suite prep area provides a convenient sink and storage space for the gallery crew. Be sure to stop by the galleries often - a new show is installed about twice a month!

RECITAL HALL
The Recital Hall meets professional acoustic standards in every way. It is a tunable room, so the faculty and students are able to adjust the levels of reverberation to accommodate the precise style of music being performed. The Recital Hall is Kinder HSPVA's most intimate venue at 150 seats, providing a formal home for the Vocal and Instrumental Music Departments.

STUDIO THEATRE
The Studio Theatre provides a casual performance venue that every art area can access. The proscenium-style stage faces retractable stadium seating for 200 guests. When the seats are retracted against the wall, the Studio Theatre becomes a large studio for daily classwork. We expect to see readings by creative writers, performance art by visual artists, and lots of showcase work by theatre, music, and dance students in this multiuse space!
We sincerely thank the donors to the HSPVA Friends Capital Campaign, who have contributed $8.73 million for Kinder HSPVA.

To join the effort to complete, maintain, and use this campus to its full potential, visit hspvafriends.org/downtown.