

# SCULPTURE COMPLETES AWARD-WINNING BUILDING

The Manon Caine Russell Kathryn Caine Wanlass Performance Hall at Utah State University has been called the jewel of the university’s arts facilities. Now, the completion of the sculptural installation “*Passacaglia*” puts an exclamation point on a project that came straight from the heart.

Perhaps that should be hearts — plural — because many were involved. But it was the love, dedication and vision of two women that inspired many, guaranteeing a beautiful addition to the campus environment.

Kathryn Caine Wanlass and Manon Caine Russell, sisters, have long supported education and the arts at

Utah State. As individuals and as founding members of the Marie Eccles Caine Foundation, they have contributed to the education of hundreds, if not thousands, of the university’s students while providing the foundation of the region’s cultural offerings. They were instrumental, through the Marie Eccles Caine Foundation, in the establishment of the Caine School of the Arts in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at USU. But their gift of the Performance Hall to the university was a private one, one they believed in from the project’s inception. At the time, it was the largest individual gift in the university’s history.

While “*Passacaglia*” completes the Performance Hall, the structure has already earned accolades for its

design. The building opened Thursday, Jan. 12, 2006, and is the first on campus designed specifically for chamber music. It seats 431 audience members and a maximum of 22 musicians on its stage. And, its technical elements are astounding. There are 18-inch thick concrete walls that fully insulate the interior of the hall. There are adjustable curtains and canopies that contribute to the acoustic excellence. Small vents under every seat ensure silent air flow. The details of the building’s planning and construction go on and on.

Lead architect for the Performance Hall was Vinicius Gorgati of Sasaki Associates, Inc. He said he designed the building as if it were a public work of art. In a tribute to the distinctive



Guests view the completed sculpture in the lobby of the Performance Hall. (Photo provided by USU’s Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art)

scenery of Cache Valley, the front façade is wrapped in a wrinkled zinc skin that mimics the folds of the Bear River Mountains.

“We wanted the hall to look like it grew out of the landscape,” said Gorgati’s colleague, master planner Ricardo Dumont.

“The Performance Hall has a vulnerability, an openness, a delicacy to it,” *“Passacaglia”* creator and Bay Area artist Ann Preston said. “It doesn’t sit there like a bank or a city hall with four feet planted on the ground. It allows you to think your own thoughts and feel your own feelings.”

With its detailed planning and painstaking installation, *“Passacaglia”* was completed in September 2007. Elements of the sculpture extend from the wall into the floor of the lobby and continue beyond the interior of the building and its glass walls into the plaza.

The piece is constructed of geometric forms that evolve in a mathematical and organic sequence.

“The sculpture takes on a presence of mechanical accuracy balanced against organic, nature-like forms rendered in burnished and molded steel and mottled suede-like grey panels,” said Victoria Rowe, director of USU’s Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art.

The museum, under Rowe’s leadership, has curatorial oversight of the sculpture.

The sculpture’s name — *“Passacaglia”* — derives from a musical form related to dance. The sculpture is composed of geometric forms — a dance of triangles transform into larger geometric units that then expand into a counter rhythm of contoured panels, Rowe said.

“The steel elements sparkle, reflecting light and provide a contrast of texture with the velvety warm grey patina of the tetrahedral forms,” she said. “Standing before it, the viewer is simultaneously awed by its scale and captivated by its presence. Yet, somehow it intrigues more than overpowers, entreating its audience to return and look again.”

“The benefits of this gift will be experienced in perpetuity,” USU President Stan L. Albrecht said at the Performance Hall dedication. “We want to thank Kathryn Caine Wanlass and Manon Caine Russell for the generous gift that makes this world-class performance hall possible. This premier venue will make an enormous difference in the academic, professional and personal lives of our students and faculty.”

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#### **Critical acclaim and honors for the Manon Caine Russell Kathryn Caine Wanlass Performance Hall:**

- “Achieving the Art of Acoustics – The grand opening of Utah State University’s new performance hall was just that — grand — because the building fits that description in every way.” *Intermountain Contractor* (March 1, 2006)
- *Merit Award* from the American Institute of Architects, California Council. (Oct. 2007)
- *Outstanding Campus Architecture, Chronicle of Higher Education*. (Feb. 23, 2007)
- “Great architecture is not born solely from a drafting table and blueprints. More often it originates from a delicate mix of visionary benefactors, a dedicated purpose, a supportive community, and, of course, talented design professionals. All these elements contributed to the construction of the Manon Caine Russell Kathryn Caine Wanlass Performance Hall.” Jeremy Pugh, *Utah Style and Design Magazine* (Winter 2007)
- *Honor Award*, Utah Chapter of the American Institutes of Architects. (Oct. 2006)



(photo by Robert Preston)

- American Institutes of Architects, Utah Chapter, list of *Utah’s Best Buildings* (along with Old Main, a campus landmark). (April 2007)
- *Best Architecture Project, Intermountain Contractor*.
- *Best Mechanical/Electrical Project, Intermountain Contractor*.
- “Coolest Cache Structures,” (number six), *The Herald Journal*.