Just as the Cathedral of Learning is the symbol of Pitt’s academic tradition, the landmark Stephen Foster Memorial represents the University’s deep commitment to the performing arts. The Foster Memorial is one of the three majestic Charles Klauder buildings of Indiana limestone which occupy the Cathedral of Learning green. This crown jewel of Oakland’s Cultural Corridor and East End performances spaces is a gothic-inspired arts complex, emulating the City’s tradition of preservation and practicality. The Foster Memorial provides Pitt students and the greater community with a warm and intimate setting for artistic exchange as thousands of visitors arrive through our red doors each year. An estimated 35,000 theatre patrons, visitors, researchers and students (many from other nations) visit the Foster Memorial each year.

Conceived and initiated by members of the Tuesday Musical Club as a tribute to Pittsburgh composer Stephen Collins Foster (1826-1864), the building was completed and dedicated in 1937. The Foster Hall Collection, the principal repository for materials pertaining to the composer, was founded by Indianapolis pharmaceutical giant Josiah Kirby Lilly, and given to the university to be housed in the building. Both the Charles J. Connick stained-glass Shakespeare and Beethoven windows in the lobby and the plaza—Lilly Court—behind the auditorium—were dedicated in Lilly’s honor.

Accessible for physically-challenged audience members and performers, the Stephen Foster Memorial is a tribute to the passion of creativity and imagination. From Stephen Foster Day in January to summer residencies by Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre to the year-round theatre productions of Pitt Repertory Theatre, the Foster is alive year round with the sounds of music and words—the very inspiration for this timeless tribute to one of Pittsburgh’s own.

THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN MUSIC & THE FOSTER MUSEUM
The Stephen Foster Memorial Museum is the 12-sided wing housing Pitt’s Center for American Music that contains one of the nation’s most significant collections of 19th century music. The Foster Museum is open to the public for self-guided tours, Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 pm. Guided tours may be scheduled by reservation at $1 per person by calling the Center.

THEATRE AT PITT
Home to the productions of the University Theatre for over three decades, the Foster Memorial has been restored to provide state-of-the-art performance spaces for Pitt students and the Department of Theatre Arts. The 478-seat Charity Randall Theatre, unveiled in 2003, replicates the intimate grandeur and features of the original Foster auditorium, from the restored 1930’s seats (identical to those first installed New York’s Radio City Music Hall) to the grand lighting of the theatre’s upper vault, evocative of the Cathedral’s Common’s Room. The mainstage is equipped with technical, sound and lighting capabilities to carry Pitt Repertory Theatre and its guest companies far into the 21st century.

Downstairs in the Foster, the Henry Heymann Theatre, completed in 2000, offers audiences and players an intimate 151-seat venue.

The Fred Kelly Lobby commemorates Pittsburgh performer Fred Kelly, whose brother Gene was just one of the many Pitt-connected Kellys in the arts. The lobby also celebrates outstanding Pitt Theater alumni who are recipients of Theatre Arts’ annual Fred Kelly Award.

Guest companies at the University of Pittsburgh Foster Memorial include Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre, Prime Stage, and Unseam’d Shakespeare.

VISIT PITT ON LINE
www.pitt.edu

The Center for American Music & The Foster Museum www.library.pitt.edu/libraries/cam/cam.html
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Hours: 9:00-4:00 weekdays; Guided tours & Saturdays & Sundays by appt.
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Pitt Repertory Theatre & Department of Theatre Arts www.pitt.edu/~play
Shakespeare-in-the-Schools www.pitt.edu/~sits

Box Office: 412-624-PLAY (7529) For tickets & information
E-mail: playpr@pitt.edu
HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

• In 1927, the concept for a memorial to America's first professional songwriter Stephen Collins Foster (1826-64), a Pittsburgh native, was promoted to the University of Pittsburgh by members of the Tuesday Musical Club, which spearheaded the initial fundraising efforts for the project. The University provided a portion of the quadrangle to be devoted to the Cathedral of Learning and Heinz Chapel for a structure commemorating Foster’s life and works. Ground was broken on January 13, 1935, the 71th anniversary of the death of Stephen Foster. The building was dedicated on June 2, 1937, the University's 150th anniversary, and will celebrated its 70th year in 2007.

• Indianapolis pharmaceutical giant Josiah Lilly delivered the main groundbreaking address. He founded the Stephen Foster Collection housed in the Memorial's library and museum wing, a 12-sided shrine commemorating the composer's life and works. Pitt's Center for American Music Library is also a public museum that contains a broad cross-section of American popular culture from the 1840s to the 1930s. Lilly, Andrew Mellon and other leading Pittsburgh citizens gave significant financial gifts to the building fund.

• The original cost of the construction and materials was $550,000 in 1935. The total cost of the 2003 restoration and technical upgrade was assessed at $2.3 million.

• Architect Charles Klauder designed the structure in harmony with the Cathedral of Learning with a steel frame and the signature hand-cut Indiana limestone.

• The ironwork on the Cathedral, Heinz Chapel and the Foster Memorial is the work of Samuel Yellin of Philadelphia, an eminent artist. He designed the building's lobby and auditorium chandelier with the exception of the center lobby fixture added in restoration.

• Native Pittsburgher Charles J. Connick, a Boston native, created the stained glass work in Heinz Chapel and the windows in the Foster Memorial lobby and museum. Images of Beethoven and Shakespeare are featured in the lobby and lyrics by Stephen Foster can be found in the windows of the museum.

• Engraved above the auditorium are themes to Foster’s "Old Folks at Home" and "My Old Kentucky Home."

• A model of how the stage looked several decades ago (from the Three Rivers Shakespeare Festival's 1984 production of Measure for Measure) can be seen in the lobby.

• The original "Foster Auditorium" had 600 seats; today's Charity Randall Theatre has 453 seats and 24 chairs seats (in the balcony boxes) for a total capacity of 478 plus spaces for wheelchair accessibility. The original downstairs Social Room was redesigned as the Henry Heymann Theatre in 2000. The Heymann seats 151 patrons, in addition to handicap access. Thus, the total capacity of both theatres still exceeds the original auditorium capacity by 28 seats.

Sources: The Center for American Music; Pitt: The Story of the University of Pittsburgh 1787-1987 by Robert C. Alberts. Department of Theatre Arts archives

Are you interested in volunteering at the Stephen Foster Memorial? Call 412-624-0933 (Department of Theatre Arts marketing office), or write playpr@pitt.edu to get involved with Pitt Repertory Theatre or Shakespeare-in-the-Schools.

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