**Harlem School of the Arts Creates Breathtaking New Performance Space with WSDG**

*Historic arts center receives a crucial facelift and redesign for the next generation of Harlem artists and performers*

**New York, New York, November 13, 2019 —**For more than fifty years, the Harlem School of the Arts (HSA) has been a gathering place for students of all ages to explore art, music, and dance in an encouraging and supportive environment that draws on the rich arts traditions of the historic neighborhood in which it resides. Earlier this year the Herb Alpert Foundation announced that it would be funding a $9.5 million-dollar renovation of the facility fittingly entitled “The Renaissance Project”, with the intention of updating the building’s visual and architectural details for the next generation of artists and performers. One of the most important elements of this update is a redesign of the school’s main lobby, transforming it into bright, transparent multi-purpose performance space. Knowing that such a performance space would need high-quality and versatile acoustic design to match, Herb himself recommended the inclusion of global acoustic architectural consulting and A/V integration firm WSDG in the project’s creative team to ensure that the sound of the new facility would inspire generations of musicians and performers to come.

**An oasis of the arts**

The new 3,500 square-foot entrance of the HSA was designed to be a visual reflection of the school’s ongoing legacy as a welcoming space for aspiring artists, echoing the dreams of founder Dorothy Maynor by Celia Imrey, Assoc, AIA. LEED GA of Imrey Studio LLC. “It has always been an oasis on the inside, but that has not been fully reflected by the exterior of the building,” explained Eric Pryor, President of HSA. “To remain relevant in our local community and the greater artistic community, the public needs to see who we are and what we do.” With this in mind, the creative team redesigned the room with a two-story glass façade facing the street, allowing a large amount of natural light in the space as well as a view into the school’s activities and performances.

Accommodating the large space and the glass wall required WSDG to carefully analyze the planned space for all contingencies, ensuring that it would be easily usable as both a gallery and a performance space in multiple configurations. WSDG used advanced acoustic modeling software to simulate the new lobby space and make recommendations for optimal performance acoustics and materials. “A lot of work was done coordinating with the the design architects at Imrey Studio in order to preserve the look and feel of the space while still ensuring the right acoustics,” said WSDG Partner/COO/Project Manager Joshua Morris. “We put a lot of thought into different use scenarios for the lobby, so that the school has a lot of flexibility in how it can be used, while not requiring an army of people to do so.”

**Maximizing the possibilities**

The first major recommendation that WSDG made to the design was carefully angling the glass wall for optimal acoustics, an approach which had been used by the firm to great effect in the Appel Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center. In addition to this, a large curtain was added to the north gallery wall and between the performance area and entry area that can be raised or lowered to suit the type of performances being held in the hall, either using the east / façade wall or the north wall as the main stage or performing in the round near the center. “We designed it to be adirectional so that the school has maximum flexibility in how they want to use the room,” explained Morris. “The ability to dial in the sound with the curtain, as well as remove it so that it doesn’t obscure the gallery wall, as well as the flexible lighting grid and distributed audio gives them the ability to have performances come in multiple sizes and from multiple directions without compromising the sound quality of the space.”

Although the flexibility in the design was planned from the onset, Morris says that it serves a long-term practical purpose for the school as well. “The school is doing such a wonderful service to the community giving these kids opportunities that they wouldn’t otherwise have, but they don’t have a bottomless bucket from which to do that,” he said. “By designing solutions for them that speak to a lot of different implementations, it means that they will able to be count on the fact that these renovations will serve them for a long time and will aid them in continuing to be the beacon for the community that they are. That’s the real point of this project, maximizing the possibilities of their space in a way that’s easy and long-term.”

In addition to their work on the main lobby, WSDG is also handling A/V systems design for the site. The space is set to open in early 2020, where it will be a testament to its ongoing legacy, as well as the hard work of the large design team behind it. “We were honored to have Herb Alpert reach out to us for this project,” said WSDG Founding Partner and Director of Design John Storyk. “His appreciation for the critical importance of acoustical design is soundly based on his vast experience as an incomparable musician and recording executive.”

For more information about WSDG, please visit: <http://www.wsdg.com/>

**ABOUT WSDG, LLC**  
For 50 years, acoustic consulting and A/V integration firm [WSDG](http://www.wsdg.com/) has been designing media production facilities worldwide, over 3000, and counting. Projects range from Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Lady Studio and Jazz At Lincoln Center in New York, to broadcast facilities for The Food Network, CBS and WNET, over twenty teaching studios for The Art Institutes, and corporate clients such as Sony, IBM and Novartis. Recent credits include Jungle City in New York, The Church Studio, in London, private studios for Green Day, Jay-Z, Bruce Springsteen, Alicia Keys and Academy Award-nominated film composer Carter Burwell. WSDG has collaborated with such noted architects as Frank Gehry, Philippe Stark, Rafael Viñoly, Santiago Calatrava, Grimshaw, and Norman Foster.  An eleven-time winner of the prestigious pro audio NAMM [TEC Award](https://www.tecawards.org/) for outstanding achievement in Acoustics/Facility Design, WSDG maintains U.S. offices in New York, Washington, DC, San Francisco and Miami and global offices in Barcelona, Basel, Berlin, Belo Horizonte, Buenos Aires, Guangzhou, Mexico City and Mumbai.

**Contact:**

Steve Bailey

Hummingbird Media, Inc.

+1 (508) 596-9321

[steve@hummingbirdmedia.com](mailto:steve@hummingbirdmedia.com)

Jeff Touzeau

Hummingbird Media, Inc.

+1 (914) 602-2913

[jeff@hummingbirdmedia.com](mailto:jeff@hummingbirdmedia.com)