

## **Northwestern Honors Blackhawks Chairman, Other Supporters at Wirtz Center Dedication - POSTED ON FRIDAY, JULY 14, 2017**

President Morton Schapiro, Marilyn Wirtz, Trustee William Rockwell “Rocky” Wirtz ’75, Trustee Judith S. Block ’63, and Dean Barbara O’Keefe dedicate the School of Communication’s newly renovated Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts

In the 1970s, Northwestern University alumna and supporter Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz ’24, a champion of the arts, helped her alma mater raise the funds needed to build what was then the Theatre and Interpretation Center. Today, her memory lives on in the newly renovated Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts.

A gift from her grandson, Chicago Blackhawks chairman William Rockwell “Rocky” Wirtz ’75, and his wife, Marilyn, enabled Northwestern to rename the center in Virginia’s honor in 2014. University leaders honored the Wirtz family and other lead benefactors of the School of Communication at a June 13 ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the official reopening of the fully renovated center.

“Northwestern and the Wirtz family have been connected for many decades,” Northwestern President Morton Schapiro told an audience of more than 70 University supporters, trustees, administrators and others in the Wirtz Center’s stunning new blackbox theater.

Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz graduated from the University’s

undergraduate business school in 1924. Her daughter, Elizabeth “Betty” Wirtz, attended the School of Communication, then the School of Speech, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Rocky Wirtz, who graduated from the School of Communication in 1975, is a University trustee and has served on the School of Communication’s National Advisory Council since 1986.

“Our theatre graduates from the School of Communication have shined a spotlight on the overall excellence of Northwestern in a way that nothing else has,” Schapiro added. “Thanks to the Wirtzes, now we have a performance center that is befitting the quality of the work that takes place in this school, and I think that the sky is the limit.”

The building was renovated to improve the accessibility and function of existing spaces and to create new classroom, rehearsal and performance spaces.

“Looking at all the new plays, new curricula, and new students and faculty in our school, I am filled with appreciation for the gift of this new and expanded performing arts center and the resources we now have to support faculty and student projects,” said Barbara O’Keefe, Annenberg University Professor and dean of the School of Communication. “Now our performing arts center in Evanston can truly support the creativity and ambitions of our community.”

For more than three decades, the Wirtz Center has helped fuel the success of Northwestern’s top-ranked programs in

theatre, dance, music theatre and performance studies. The center produces, manages, funds and administers the School of Communication's mainstage performances. Each year, it mounts as many as 40 productions in its four different performance venues -- the 439-seat Ethel M. Barber Theater, the 288-seat Josephine Louis Theater, the 100-seat Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis Theater and the 100-seat Mussetter-Struble Theater -- as well as in the University's 1,000-seat Cahn Auditorium.

My grandmother loved the performing arts, she loved Northwestern, and she loved the School of Communication," Rocky Wirtz said. "We're very proud that, for the rest of our lives, her name will be a part of the University and this extraordinary performance center."

Rocky Wirtz is president of Wirtz Corporation, one of the largest family-owned businesses in the United States; chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks; and co-chairman of Breakthru Beverage Group, a leading national distributor of the world's top luxury and premium wine, spirits and beer brands. He oversees commercial and residential real estate companies, an insurance agency and banks in Illinois and Florida and is co-chairman of Chicago's United Center.

Under Wirtz's direction, the Chicago Blackhawks have won three Stanley Cup championships.

In 2010, Wirtz was honored for achievements with the Chicago Blackhawks and the Wirtz Beverage Group as a recipient of the "Vision Award" at the Chicago Innovation

Awards. He serves as a member of the board of directors of the Chicago Blackhawks Charities, a trustee for The Field Museum and a member of the executive and audit committees of the National Hockey League.

Rocky Wirtz and his wife, Marilyn, reside in the northern suburbs of Chicago. Rocky has three children, and Marilyn has one daughter. Rocky is also the proud grandfather of two granddaughters and a grandson.

Rocky and Marilyn Wirtz previously established the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Endowment for Visiting Artists at Northwestern in honor of Rocky's grandmother. The couple's generosity has also supported the School of Communication's high-profile collaborations with professional artists and regional theaters, such as the American Music Theatre Project, and provided resources for the School of Communication's arts programs for Chicago-area children, including Imagine U and the Children's Theatre Tour, and for its graduate programs in theatre directing and design.

Details about the renovated spaces within the Wirtz Center follow.

The Wirtz Center addition includes three studio theaters, instructional spaces used for theatre, performance studies and dance programs: The April McClain-Delaney and John Delaney Studio Theater, named in recognition of a gift from April McClain-Delaney '86, '15 P, '18 P and Congressman John Delaney '15 P, '18 P; the Spohler Family Studio Theater, named in recognition of a gift from

Bruce '86 MBA, '17 P and Melissa Spohler '17 P and family; and the Barbara and Garry Marshall Studio Theater, named in recognition of a gift from Barbara and the late Garry Marshall '56, '86 P, '90 P, '91 P, '18 GP.

Each studio theater is equipped with a spring floor, curtains, full-length mirrors, acting cubes, floor mats and loose seating, as well as state-of-the-art technology. Outside of classes, students use these spaces to rehearse for upcoming projects or performances. The rooms are also used for student auditions and independent study projects.

Since the Barbara and Garry Marshall Studio Theater is often utilized by those studying screen acting, it also includes three curtain tracks with black, white and Chroma key green layers; an LCD screen (rather than a projector), so students may better perform in front of an image; more film-style than theatrical-style lighting in the grid; and dedicated camera equipment for recording performances.

The Judith and Philip Block III Seminar Room -- named in recognition of a gift from Judith S. Block '63, trustee, and the late Philip D. Block III '93 P, '02 P, '03 P -- is used as an instruction space for various courses related to the theatre program. It has audio-visual capabilities and modular movable furniture for flexible use. Outside of classes, students use this space to rehearse for upcoming projects or performances.

The Whitman Music Studio -- named in recognition of a gift from the Purple Plume Foundation in honor of Barbara

Whitman '11 P, '13 P -- and the Maxine Hupy '11 and Rex Hupy '13 Performing Arts Practice Room -- named in recognition of a gift from Suzanne and Michael Hupy '11 P, '13 P -- are designed for instructional use, specifically vocal coaching, for up to eight students. Each space is equipped with a whiteboard surface, a flat-screen monitor and a hybrid baby grand piano. The rooms also feature a full-length wall mirror so students can monitor their posture while singing.

The Ruth and Todd Warren Computer Lab -- named in recognition of a gift from Ruth and Todd Warren '87 -- accommodates an instructor and up to 11 students. Instruction is given using computer graphic software for scenic, costume and lighting design. Each of the lab's 12 computers is equipped with software for 3-D modeling, light-grid planning, 2-D and 3-D animation and architectural rendering. When not scheduled for coursework, the space is used as a general computer lab. The room also features a wide-format scanner/copier/plotter.

Serving as the entry point for the Wirtz Center complex and a welcoming venue for gatherings, the Secunda Family Foundation Lobby is named in recognition of a gift from the Secunda Family Foundation in honor of Cindy and Thomas Secunda '13 P and Amy Secunda '13.

In addition to the above named spaces, the Wirtz Center features a blackbox theater -- used for theatre, performance studies and dance programs -- with a 24-

foot-high ceiling with a structural grid to support aerial performance work. The blackbox theater offers tiered seating for 70 people and loose seating for up to 100. The Wirtz Center also includes an additional seminar room for instruction and rehearsal, additional coaching rooms for vocal students, and dry and wet design studios for theatre students to learn and develop set and stage design.

Senior theatre major Jessie Jennison '17 -- who performed at the ceremony with fellow students Charlotte Morris '17, Eric Peters '17, Justin Tepper '17 and Noah Teplin '17 -- said the center's expansion is providing students with much-needed spaces for practice and learning and something else:

"There's community around this physical building," Jennison said. "Students can hang out here, and it's bringing us together."

The funds raised through We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern are helping realize the transformational vision set forth in Northwestern's strategic plan and solidify the University's position among the world's leading research universities.