

## Dignitaries hail new SCPA at ceremony

By Mary Ellyn Hutton  
Post music writer

A new Cincinnati School for Creative and Performing Arts is no longer just a dream.

With the turn of a shovel and an open-air concert Thursday evening by Erich Kunzel and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, the school became "a physical presence," said Thomas J. Klinedinst, chairman of the Greater Cincinnati Arts and Education Center, the not-for-profit group organized to bring the project to fruition nearly a decade ago.

The \$72 million facility, an arts campus that will incorporate SCPA and Schiel Primary School, will occupy the block bordered by Elm, Race and 12 Streets and front on Central Parkway. It is the "largest development project in Over-the-Rhine" since the construction of Music Hall in 1878," said Klinedinst.

"This is truly a day of firsts," he said. "We have the first K-12 public arts school in the United States being constructed here. We have a nationally unprecedented public school system-private sector partnership, none equaling this magnitude in the United States."

The event also marked the first outdoor performance by the Pops - founded in 1977 - in Over-the-Rhine. The orchestra played on 12th Street, across from Washington Park.

Dignitaries including Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory, Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Rosa Blackwell, former Vice Mayor Jim Tarbell and former state Sen. Stanley Aronoff attended the ceremony.

"I believe there is something wonderful about the creative and performing arts that enrich our lives and make us better people," said Strickland. "I believe in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education and am trying to support STEM education in Ohio, but I never want the creative and performing arts and the humanities to be relegated to a place of secondary importance in our community."

Mallory said the project is indicative of the new energy in Over-the-Rhine. He cited the work the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. is doing, the addition of the Cincinnati Art Academy and the Know Theater, initiatives by the Ensemble Theater and improvements to Music Hall.

"The SCPA is going to add to this collection of art and cultural institutions and make life not only in OTR, but in all of this region, even more exciting," he said.

Kunzel, visionary and prime mover of the project, called the school the catalyst for revitalization of Over-the-Rhine. "Things are going to start happening down here," he said.

One of the first will be the demolition of the now-closed Washington Park School, perhaps as soon as in the next month. Though there are plans for re-development of Washington Park, in the short run the space now occupied by Washington Park School will provide parking for Music Hall that will be lost when construction begins on the new SCPA.

**Ninety percent of the \$72 million budget for the school is committed, said Klinedinst.**

"This includes land acquisition, demolition and construction," he said. "The GCAEC has committed to raise \$31 million for capital funding of the project. We still need to raise \$7 million in capital funding."

Numerous naming opportunities exist, he said, including an outdoor amphitheater, to be constructed at the corner of 12th and Elm streets.

Funding for the project comes from a combination of public and private sources. In addition to the \$31 million Klinedinst's group will raise, Cincinnati Public Schools are contributing nearly \$34 million and the state of Ohio \$7.3 million.

**The school is expected to open during the 2009-2010 school year.**



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Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, center, passed out shovels to participants in Thursday's groundbreaking for a new School for Creative and Performing Arts in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine. Also in attendance were Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory, Cincinnati Pops music director Erich Kunzel and Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Rosa Blackwell.



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Violin students from Schiel Elementary played "Twinkle, Twinkle" accompanied by the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra as part of the groundbreaking ceremony Thursday for a new SCPA. The new facility will house Schiel, an arts-focused primary school, as well as the current secondary school.