



HISTORY

NOVEMBER 1977 – 38 acres donated for a performing arts center

June Baumgardner Gelbart donates a 38-acre parcel of land to the City of Clearwater in the name of Kapok Tree Inns Corporation. The memorial gift in honor of Richard B. Baumgardner, Sr. stipulates that the development of a performing arts center on the site must begin by early 1980. Ambassador Al Hoffman leads the fundraising effort.

FEBRUARY 6, 1978 – A non-profit management company formed

Community leaders choose a Board of Directors, establishing the Performing Arts Center and Theater, Inc. (PACT, Inc.), a private, non-profit corporation to build, finance and direct all operational activities. The corporation enters into a long-term lease-hold agreement with the City of Clearwater.

The prestigious Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, headed by Chief Architect William Wesley Peters, designs Ruth Eckerd Hall. Total cost of the facility is \$14.5 million. The private sector raises \$9 million, prompting 10 lending institutions to grant a \$5.5 million, 25-year mortgage loan, guaranteed by the local municipalities of Clearwater and Dunedin, Pinellas County and Newhouse Broadcasting Group.

DECEMBER 15, 1979 – Ground breaking

NOVEMBER 1980 – Arnold N. Breman named first Executive Director

Breman is former Executive Director of the Clemens Performing Arts Center in Elmira, New York.

OCTOBER 15, 1983 – Ruth Eckerd Hall dedicated

The Florida Gulf Coast Symphony (now The Florida Orchestra) performs the first piece on the new stage. The following evening the first official publicly attended performance by the Suzuki Children of Japan plays to a sold out audience.

NOVEMBER 18, 1986 – Governor's Design Award presented by the State of Florida

NOVEMBER 4, 1987 – Arts education facility dedicated

The PACT Institute for the Performing Arts is created to provide the finest arts educational opportunities, including In-School-Time performances, Master Classes, workshops in theater, music and dance for all ages, private instruction, lectures and demonstrations. Its Community Arts Education program introduces the same programming to underserved areas through cooperative ventures with local agencies, corporations and schools. The following year, Eckerd Theater Company (ETC) is formed as the resident children's theater company touring throughout Florida and the Southeast.

MARCH 5, 1990 – Elissa O. Getto named Executive Director

Breman resigns to become Executive Director at West Palm Beach's new Kravis Center. Getto is Ruth Eckerd Hall's Director of Education.

SEPTEMBER 1991– Ruth Eckerd Hall designated a Major Cultural Institution

It is the first performing arts center in Florida to receive the designation.

NOVEMBER 25, 1992 – Wall of Stars dedicated

Thirty-two major donors, whose gifts ranged from \$150,000 to \$2 million, are recognized in a dedication ceremony for the Wall of Stars.

MAY 1, 1995 – Nancy Sullivan Skinner named Executive Director

Getto resigns to become Executive Director of Wolftrap in Washington, D.C. Skinner previously served as Managing Director of Miami's Gusman Center for the Performing Arts.

AUGUST 10, 1998 – Robert A. Freedman named Executive Director

Freedman previously served as Executive Director at the California Center for the Arts in Escondido.

MARCH 2000 – Ruth Eckerd Hall ranked #1 by Florida Division of Cultural Affairs panel

MAY 2000 – “Setting The Stage For Future Generations” Capital Campaign launched

Plan includes renovation of audience chamber, addition of grand concourse, creation of an education wing to house growing demand for services. Campaign leadership includes prominent community volunteers Dan Mann, Barry Alpert, Ruth B. Eckerd, James M. Cantonis, Frederick E. Fisher, Gus A. Stavros, David Stone, Ann Wilkins Duncan, Kenneth G. Hamilton, L. Douglas Bailey and Joshua Magidson. The Eckerd Family lead challenge gift of \$5 million anchors the launch of the \$21 million campaign (later extended to \$28 million).

JUNE 11, 2001 – Ground breaking for new Education wing

Florida State Education Commissioner Charlie Crist is keynote.

DECEMBER 12, 2001– \$1 Million Kresge Challenge Grant awarded

Over 750 donors raise the \$20 million necessary to earn the \$1 million challenge grant by the December 31, 2002 deadline

NOVEMBER 2002 – Ruth Eckerd Hall nominated *Pollstar's* Theater of the Year

DECEMBER 2002 – Marcia P. Hoffman Performing Arts Institute named

The Hoffman family honors original Ruth Eckerd Hall arts advocate Marcia P. Hoffman. The facility includes three studio classrooms, four private teaching studios, the Michael & Joan Kline Dance Studio, the Henrietta Campbell Rehearsal Studio, a visual arts learning lab and the new 182-seat Murray Studio Theater.

JANUARY 31, 2003 – Inaugural Performance in the new 182-seat Murray Studio Theater

The performance includes the premier of a piece composed by Principal Bassoonist Mark Sforzini and commissioned by Ray and Nancy Murray.

FEBRUARY 2, 2003 – Community Open House for new education facility

Speakers include Clearwater Mayor Brian Aungst and Pinellas County Commissioner Karen Seel discussing the importance of the new facility. Members of the Hoffman family cut the ribbon, officially opening the Institute.

OCTOBER 29, 2003 – Re-opening of renovated auditorium

FEBRUARY 4, 2004 – Opening of the Dimmitt Family Atrium Lounge

Larry Dimmitt, Jr. and his wife, Marge, cut the ribbon with children Eileen, Richard and Lawrence III.

FEBRUARY 5, 2004 – Opening of the Grand Concourse

Mayor Brian Augst, Ken Hamilton, David Stone, Bill Nodine, Josh Magidson and Pat Fletcher cut the ribbon.

MAY 19, 2004– Jack Eckerd, businessman, philanthropist, and founder passes away.

OCTOBER 2004 – Progress Energy sets precedent sponsoring an entire season

The sponsorship continues for years until company headquarters moves out of state.

JULY 2005 – Re-opening of the Challenger-Morrow Production Studios

Project funded by a gift from Ray and Nancy Murray in honor of long-term arts education supporters, Bob Challenger and Nelson Morrow.

JULY 28, 2006 – Ruth Eckerd, namesake and founder passes away.

MARCH 2007–Directors unanimously approve name change

For clarity, the operating company, Performing Arts Center & Theater, Inc. becomes Ruth Eckerd Hall, Inc. The foundation, Performing Arts Center Foundation, Inc. becomes Ruth Eckerd Hall Foundation, Inc.

APRIL 2008 – 25th anniversary celebration

Features debut work by Tony Award®-nominated Artistic Director Donald Byrd, choreographed to *A Suite for Ruth*, a jazz piece composed by Dave Koz and five-time GRAMMY® nominee David Benoit, commissioned for Ruth Eckerd Hall's 20th anniversary.

DECEMBER 2008 – Ruth Eckerd Hall nominated Theater of the Year

Pollstar announces finalists are Ruth Eckerd Hall, Beacon Theatre (NY), the Chicago Theatre, Fox Theatre (Atlanta), Nokia Theatre (LA), Radio City Music Hall (NY) and Ryman Auditorium (Nashville).

JANUARY 2009 – The City of Clearwater and Ruth Eckerd Hall partner to save the historic landmark Capitol Theatre in the Cleveland Street District.

Built in 1921, the renovation is part of the revitalization of the downtown. The city purchases the property and funds the renovation through the Penny for Pinellas program. Ruth Eckerd Hall establishes a reserve fund for future needs and operates the facility.

NOVEMBER 2009 – Ruth Eckerd Hall unveils Christopher Still painting

Nationally acclaimed Florida artist is commissioned to commemorate Ruth Eckerd Hall's 25 years of bringing arts to the community.

MARCH 2010 – Ruth Eckerd Hall, Inc. and Ruth Eckerd Hall Foundation, Inc. are merged into one corporation becoming Ruth Eckerd Hall, Inc.

JANUARY 2012 – Zev Buffman named Ruth Eckerd Hall President & CEO

Freedman retires after 14 years. Buffman is the former President & CEO of the RiverPark Center, in Owensboro, Kentucky

MAY 2012 – The first \$18 million phase of the “Expanding the Experience” Capital Campaign is announced

MARCH 2013 – Capitol Theatre restoration begins

JUNE 2013 – Ruth Eckerd Hall named Tampa Bay Business Journal’s 2013 Nonprofit of the Year, Arts, Culture and Humanities

JULY 2013 – Long time resident and member, Geri Trautlein contributes \$1 million in honor of husband, Ray

The Grand Lobby and Dress Circle Lounge at the Capitol Theatre are named in their honor.

OCTOBER 2013 – Local restaurateur Michael “Frenchy” Preston donates \$350,000, adding his familiar nickname to the Capitol Theatre’s Rooftop Terrace.

DECEMBER 2013 – Ribbon cutting for the restored Capitol Theatre.

FEBRUARY 2014 – The Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce presents Ruth Eckerd Hall with the Large Sized Nonprofit of the Year Award.

APRIL 2014 – Capitol Theatre named Most Improved Property

Presented at the Seventh Annual Clearwater Downtown Partnership Momentum Awards.

APRIL 2014 – Member Elden Weiss contributes \$775,000 to campaign

The Grand Concourse is named in honor of Elden and his late wife, Ruth.

OCTOBER 2014 – Capitol Theatre honored with Tampa Bay Businesses for Culture and the Arts (TBBCA) Nonprofit Impact Award.

MARCH 2015 – Re-opening of the renovated Murray Theatre

Senator Jack Latvala is keynote.

SEPTEMBER 2016 – Re-opening of the renovated Margarete Heye Great Room

FEBRUARY 2017 – Awarded the prestigious Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce Judges’ Choice Award.

OCTOBER 2017 – Kate Tiedemann and Ellen Cotton pledge \$1.5 million

The new education-purposed cabaret theatre is named in their honor.

JUNE 2018 – Sharon Reid-Kane, Education & Outreach Officer, presented the Arts Education Professional Award by the Florida Alliance for Arts Education.

JULY 2018 – The Marcia P. Hoffman School for the Arts is designated a GRAMMY Museum® Affiliate.

AUGUST 2018 – Ruth Eckerd Hall and Pinellas County Schools chosen for the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

OCTOBER 2018 – Zev Buffman, President & CEO, retires.

Susan M. Crockett, Chief Operations Officer / Vice President of Operations is named Acting President & CEO. Arts Consulting Group is engaged to conduct an international search resulting in 78 applicants.

DECEMBER 2018 – Nominated Large Nonprofit of the Year by Amplify Clearwater

February 2019 – Nancy and David Bilheimer donate \$2.5 million to expand and sustain arts education

The Capitol Theatre is renamed in their honor.

JUNE 2019 – The Board of Directors appoints Susan M. Crockett President & CEO.

Crockett held multiple positions over 30 years with Ruth Eckerd Hall.

NOVEMBER 2019 – Unveiling of the Kate Tiedemann and Ellen Cotton Cabaret Theatre, Holt Family Stage, and the Hoffman Family Dress Circle

APRIL 2020 – Ruth Eckerd Hall ranked #39 in the *Tampa Bay Times* Top Workplaces.

Ruth Eckerd Hall, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, manages and operates 2,200-seat Ruth Eckerd Hall, the 200-seat Murray Theatre, the newly renovated 250-capacity ballroom, the Margarete Heye Great Room, the Marcia P. Hoffman School of the Arts, the 750-seat Nancy and David Bilheimer Capitol Theatre and Ruth Eckerd Hall On The Road, serving over 400,000 patrons and 45,000 students each year.

Changing lives through the performing arts.