Built in 1962, the 700-seat, 25,000sf Garrison Theater at Scripps College was renovated and incorporated into the $12M, 46,000 sfg Performing Arts Center expansion. Additions included a 110-seat variable acoustics recital/rehearsal/lecture hall, numerous new music faculty studios, multiple practice rooms, music library and offices. During our critical listening and benchmark testing of Garrison’s initial state, it quickly became apparent that the preponderance of sound was directed to the absorptive rear wall surfaces, thereby minimizing the potential reverberance and sense of envelopment. Additionally, the room’s HVAC system was so noisy as to require it be “off” during important performances.

Once the stage redesign was underway to accommodate the expanded music program, MCH experimented with scale models, testing various concepts with laser light substituting for “sound rays” reflecting off mirrored, prospective new wall and ceiling surfaces. The Recital Hall is designed to double as a full Choral Rehearsal room with choristers seated as they would be within the orchestra shell on the Garrison Stage. In the end, the acoustical design required maximizing the facility’s potential to meet the musicians’ needs while meeting the requirements of audio-reinforced events and, of course, still yield good architecture. Opened in November 2003 as a great success, acoustically and otherwise.

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