

Acoustic Consultant:	Nagata Acoustics
Architect:	Michael Maltzan Architecture
Owner:	Rice University
Construction Cost:	\$ 30 Million (U.S.)

The Moody Center seeks to bring to Rice University campus a diverse, interdisciplinary arts program which should serve both the university and broader Houston communities. The building was designed by Michael Maltzan Architecture, based in Los Angeles. Nagata Acoustics served as the acoustic consultant to the architect for room acoustics, sound isolation and mechanical noise control for the entire facility.

Disciplines such as painting, sculpture, film, video, digital interactive media, music and theater, amongst others, are expected to find a home in the building. The building also serves the university at large by offering three general-purpose classroom spaces. The work spaces in the building are centered around a high-ceilinged “Flexible Studio.” Around the central space are four smaller work rooms, a wood shop, metal shop, paint shop and rapid prototyping lab, a “digital classroom” and four A/V edit suites. Numerous staff and faculty offices and support facilities provide for all needs of the students in the building.

Contrasting with the light-filled spaces for visual art in the rest of the building, the Studio Theater follows the tradition of the highly flexible “Black Box” space. In this case, however, the dominant color is a dark gray, which successfully differentiates the space from the standard black box. The room offers 150 seats in the most common configuration, though up to 199 seats can be accommodated. These seats can be arranged in a wide variety of settings to foster multiple types of performances. In many cases, the 150 seats will face the front of the room, organized on retractable risers so as to provide excellent sight lines to the 45 feet wide by 20 feet deep stage.

The acoustical concept for the space centers on providing a commodious environment for as many performance types as possible. To that end, the largest possible volume for the site was assigned, with a ceiling height of 26 feet and overall dimensions of 46 feet wide and 62-3/4 feet long. The walls are partially covered with sound absorbing fiberglass panels, which double as tackable surfaces for the easy display of artwork. Sound absorbing panels suspended 20 inches below the ceiling further control the reverberation time by introducing substantial broad-band and low-frequency absorption.

Running on three sides of the room, an acoustically transparent technical balcony provides more flexibility for easily accommodating theatrical equipment. The balcony is also prepared with adjustable curtains at the main floor level, to allow the space to comfortably host performances of amplified music. Curtains can also cover the front wall of the room.



**BUILDING DETAILS**

Location	6100 Main Street Rice University Houston, Texas
Seating Capacity:	150-199
Room Volume:	2,380m <sup>3</sup>
Finish Materials:	
Ceiling & Walls:	Gypsum board, partially with fixed acoustical absorption
Variable Acoustics:	Curtains
Audience Floor:	Concrete





Previous:

- Starburst column  
(© Nash Baker)
- Exterior approach  
(© Nash Baker)

From top:

- Studio theater with  
audience seating  
(© James Leng,  
Michael Maltzan  
Architecture)
- View from studio  
theater control room  
with audience seats  
stored

