

These Walls: Charles Page High School Performing Arts Building

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Fittingly, the center was designed to showcase sound. (Photo by Rip Stell)

SAND SPRINGS – When Sand Springs voters approved 2009’s \$42 million school bond proposal, they funded construction of an elementary school, field house improvements and creation of a modern home for the high school’s band and choir departments.

They didn’t anticipate the architects at Kinslow, Keith and Todd and contractor Flintco would give the city a new landmark.

“Certainly this building will serve our kids in Sand Springs for many years to come from a fine arts perspective and from a beautiful location,” said schools Superintendent Lloyd Snow, sitting inside the two-story structure completed June 10 after 11 months of construction. “But for the residents that go by here nightly a lot, they all say, ‘Wow!’”

That reflects the stunning southern entry face of the Charles Page High School Performing Arts Building, a wall of dark glass divided by a dozen rectangular “fins” spread like fish gills or rear-window louvers. By day the reflective glass captures images of blue skies and passing clouds framed by the structure’s “sunflower wheat” stone bricks. By night the glass transforms into golden columns of glowing light escaping night-blackened stone – which just happens to match the school colors.

“When you come down Adams Road and you look at this building, it’s almost like you can put yourself in Washington, D.C., or the Smithsonian,” said Snow. “It’s very impressive.”

All of those aesthetics serve needed functions. Project Architect Sarah Gould said the angled flat surfaces cushion interior acoustics from reverb while balancing natural light into the band room and the second-floor atrium, the stone fins directing the dividing glass panels east.

“This building has a big focus on acoustics,” said Flintco Senior Project Manager Russ Peevy, noting the many ceiling and wall sound defusers. “Just a lot of effort went into the acoustics of this building.”



To start on the right footing, Kinslow, Keith and Todd hired consultants J.E. Acoustics of Austin to outline structural needs to handle all the sounds expected from this building, its steel frame wrapped in concrete, masonry glass and aluminum.

"It was really designed around the recommendations of the acoustic engineer," said Kinslow, Keith Principal Patrick Keith.

The staircases at either end form light wells that boost air circulation between the floors. The eastern stairwell also boasts one of the 21,000-square-foot building's most cherished elements – a giant silhouette of the Sand Springs Minuteman, formed in gold and black tiles cut by water jet.

While visible inside the building, Peevy said the image leaps out to night passersby.

"It's really unique, eye-catching," he said. "It's a great stamp on the project there."

Snow admitted some apprehension about how the artwork would look.

"I'm not going to mislead anyone – we were all kind of nervous about this minuteman silhouette," he said. "But I couldn't be happier. It really is a cool element to this facility."

Uniquely positioned as the southern entry point to the high school campus, its second-floor choir room offering a sweeping end-zone view of the football stadium, Sand Springs' new performing arts building at 600 N. Adams Rd. promises a wide range of potential uses, from community and school board meeting rooms to a warm place for gridiron boosters to get out of the elements and still watch the game. Snow expects to tap many such opportunities over a long lifetime of use.

"It's the cornerstone of this campus to some extent, the crown jewel of this campus," he said. "This is another step in striving for excellence for kids and asking kids for their best."

The Journal Record profiles a significant Oklahoma City or Tulsa building in "These Walls" every Friday and Monday.