

The new structure contains 43,516 square feet of space. It provides facilities for the St. Ambrose music, art, engineering, speech and drama departments.

Hopefully the Fine Arts Center will be dedicated formally in May with the presentation of an opera, a rare cultural offering in this area.

The auditorium of the new building is described as "a dream" by the Rev. J. E. Greene, Chairman of the Department of Music. "It really works," he says, "whether you're on stage, back stage or out front."

There is a house capacity of 1,231 seats. The uniqueness of the auditorium, however, is in its functional design. The entire area can be partitioned off by accordion door walls to lend itself to five separate operations. The general section on the main floor seats 520 persons. Four bays can be converted into small auditoriums or lecture halls. Two of them on the mezzanine hold a total of 403 seats, while the other two accommodate 308 seats.

The stage curtain is Spanish red, set off by deep blue walls and flanked on either side by three large white panels. The four bays are decorated a lighter blue.

An unusual feature of the orchestra pit is the formation of a thrust stage with a three-foot wide ramp encircling the pit as an additional acting area.

The stage itself shows the touches of expert planning. There are entrances and exits in every available niche. The center of the floor has a trap door which can be used theatrically or for access to the set-building shop directly below. There are 25 battens available to "fly" sets out of sight up to the grids high above, enabling stage crews to complete set changes within thirty seconds. The back wall has a ramp door large enough to unload a truck or to drive an automobile onto the stage.

The main floor of the Fine Arts Center also includes a recital-rehearsal hall. It is carpeted, has draperies on one wall, and features a teakwood floor in the performance area. There are music theory classrooms with black slate walls, faculty studios, and six practice rooms in which no two walls are parallel for accoustical reasons. Accoustical paneling also is used on some walls.

The art wing of the building includes offices, classrooms, dark room, slide storage room and a slide-showing area. One large studio workroom covering 1,700 square feet of space encompasses an entire wall of exposure to north light in addition to skylights and banks of fluorescent lighting.

Downstairs are an engineering drawing room with north light, offices, darkroom facilities, two large studios, a sculpture room, and a printmaking area.

The upper floor contains the AM and FM stations with classrooms at each end of the building and control rooms in the center.

Approximately forty-five per-cent of the St. Ambrose classroom facilities are located in the new building. Considerable additional space now is available, The Art Department, for example, which formerly had 1,500 square feet of usable space, now has 7,389 square feet. The Department of Speech and Drama, which formerly had 1,700 square feet, now has 2,509. The Music Department, which formerly had 3,000 square feet, now has 4,154 square feet. The Engineering Department, formerly with 1,500 square feet, now has 1,696 square feet.

Five college-owned houses on Gaines Street were removed to make way for the new building which was started in the fall of 1968. Bracke, Hayes and Miller of Moline were the architects.

The building which has housed the Music Department in the past will be removed to provide additional parking space. Perhaps, someone has suggested, the new parking lot should be built in the form of a horseshoe.