The David E. and Stacey L. Goel Center for Creativity & Performance
Home of the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University

A performing arts center for the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University

Start on site / Breaking Ground: March 2024
Completion date: Anticipated Fall 2026

Area: 70,000 sq.ft

Address: 175 North Harvard Street, Allston, MA

Client: American Repertory Theater and Harvard University

Images for download: https://amrep.org/BPDA_GC-11162023

Brief / Vision:

Home of the American Repertory Theater at Harvard University, the new David E. and Stacey L. Goel Center for Creativity & Performance is designed to be a building that lifts the heart, inspires creativity, centers community, and welcomes people of all backgrounds. Created in close collaboration between A.R.T., Harvard University, Haworth Tompkins, ARC, and Charcoalblue, the Center for Creativity and Performance will be a place for public gathering, international research, teaching, and groundbreaking theatrical production.

The center consists of an interconnected family of adaptable, multi-use spaces designed to embrace future change and support creativity. As one of America’s leading cultural organizations, housed within the world’s top research institution, the David E. and Stacey L. Goel Center for Creativity & Performance at Harvard University is well-placed to offer a model for the next generation of cultural architecture by encompassing the following core principles:

**Openness** – breaking down barriers to entry (both physical and cultural), offering inclusive, democratic architectural language, and extending a welcome invitation to all

**Artistic flexibility** - capable of practical transformation (avoiding fixed theatrical formats), extending performance beyond the confines of the stages, and supportive of experimentation

**Collaboration** – born out of close collaboration and rigorous peer review, the the David E. and Stacey L. Goel Center for Creativity & Performance will encourage new ways of imagining and creating across a spectrum of artistic practices

**Sustainability and regenerative design** - aspiring to deliver a holistic blend of environmental and social strategies to minimize embodied and operational carbon, maximize wellbeing, boost biodiversity, and enhance resiliency
Response to global change:

The design responds to a world in transition, one in which cultural organizations have needed to rapidly evolve towards a more holistic mission in response to public health crises, movements for greater equality, growing political polarisation, and climate and biodiversity emergencies. Beyond the production and presentation of theater, A.R.T. is seeking to achieve more with less intensive resources; to be an agent of change for a healthier population, both physically and psychologically; and to contribute towards a society that can thrive without breaching planetary boundaries. Made largely of timber and incorporating leading edge regenerative design thinking, the building is designed to be more supple, more porous, more adaptable, and more responsive.

Design process and key architectural qualities:

Over the course of the design process, the building has undergone continuous refinement to dovetail the spatial and urban program with the existing Allston neighborhood, the emerging urban plan, and A.R.T.’s developing organizational vision to encompass the following key qualities:

**Clarity** - intuitive approach routes & natural desire lines from all directions of approach, embedding the building into an easily navigated psychological map of the neighbourhood and the city

**Focus** – a clear sense from outside of the entrance and center of the building from which the various building territories radiate

**Navigability** - good visibility and orientation around and within the building, enabling efficient use and reducing cultural barriers to access

**Democracy** – an architectural language and atmosphere that is, inclusive and welcoming

**Variety** – a family of non-specific spaces, allowing multiple options for different creative uses and gathering sizes

**Connectivity** – interplay and cross fertilisation of activity through visual connectivity, fluid space planning and adaptable infrastructure

**Technical sophistication** - to embrace new ways of working with emerging technologies, allowing creative freedom, efficient working and practical upgrading when required

**Provisionality** - pared back spaces which allow freedom for the A.R.T. team and incoming designers to set the ambience within the auditoria and studios for specific productions, and in the lobby to allow pop up events, catering, exhibitions, and more

**Seasonal responsiveness** - enabling the building to be enjoyed and used throughout the year without profligate energy use
Economy - simplicity of form and structure, rationality of construction for ease of maintenance, repair and recycling to optimise cost and carbon use in construction and use.

These are the qualities that have driven the design of the David E. and Stacey L. Goel Center for Creativity & Performance and which will enable the A.R.T. to embrace the communities of Allston, Cambridge, Boston and the wider networks of cultural research and theatrical production.

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Haworth Tompkins Quote:

“Theatre is about exploring our shared humanity in a space where people of all backgrounds come together and are invited to open their hearts. Through an inspiring and collaborative design process, our building aims to extend that open invitation to Allston and the wider world, and to provide a framework that supports the expansion of creative practices within a radical yet simple architecture of adaptable space, natural tactile materials, fresh air and light.”

Roger Watts, Director, Haworth Tompkins

Charcoalblue Quote:

“From our earliest meetings with A.R.T. and Harvard defining the design brief for the building, we have worked with them and our design team colleagues to create a series of spaces that are flexible, scalable, technically sophisticated, and, most importantly, welcoming and democratic to the audiences and artists who will inhabit them. Two theatres, complemented by technical shops, rehearsal spaces, offices, dressing rooms and indoor/outdoor public spaces, will collectively be a bustling hive of activity and connection in Allston. We’re excited to see these spaces built on North Harvard Street and enable A.R.T.’s next chapter of groundbreaking artistic production.”

Owen Hughes, Director, Charcoalblue

ARC Quote:

“Working with Harvard, the A.R.T., and our design partners on this important community space draws on two of ARC’s core values: our passion for arts and culture and our commitment to providing carbon-neutral design. We look forward to opening night, and to continuing our creative collaboration with all those involved in bringing this inclusive new space to life.”

Philip Laird, Principal, ARC
Design Team/Consultants

**Architect and design lead:** Haworth Tompkins
**Architect of Record:** Architectural Resources Cambridge (ARC)
**Main Contractor:** Shawmut Design and Construction
**Acoustics:** Charcoalblue
**Theater consultancy:** Charcoalblue
**Planning:** Epsilon (appointed to HU directly)
**Landscape:** Stimson
**Structural Engineers:** LeMessurier
**MEP/FP:** Altieri SW
**Project Manager:** Harvard Capital Projects
**Cost Consultant:** CostPlus+ (up to end of first Construction Documents stage, Shawmut now providing cost estimating)
**Façade Consultant:** Thornton Tomasetti
**Sustainability Consultant:** Thornton Tomasetti
**Code and fire egress consultant:** Howe
**Transport Consultant:** VHB (appointed to HU directly)
**Inclusive Design Consultant:** ART Access Council (client led peer review process)
**Lighting design and daylight:** LAM

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About Haworth Tompkins

Haworth Tompkins is an award-winning, London-based architectural practice formed in 1991 by Graham Haworth and Steve Tompkins. The practice has worked on a broad range of projects, including theatres, schools, housing, offices, industrial and retail spaces winning over 180 major design awards, including the RIBA Stirling Prize, and AJ100 Practice of the Year 2020 and 2022.

The highly varied portfolio is linked by a set of values rather than a stylistic signature: civility, professional responsibility, and sustainability in the widest sense are the underpinnings of the studio’s creative output. Collaboration with socially driven organisations and clients who share the belief in responsibility to create spaces for people and communities rather than for the profit of the few, has been pivotal to Haworth Tompkins.

Haworth Tompkins has steadily built an international reputation for theatre design, winning the 2014 RIBA Stirling Prize for the best UK building of the year with the Liverpool Everyman Theatre, being part of the Gold Award winning UK team at the Prague Quadrennial and exhibiting theatre work at the Venice Biennale. Performance projects include the Royal Court, the Young Vic Theatre (shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize), the Royal National Theatre, the Bridge Theatre, Bristol Old Vic, Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Battersea Arts Centre, Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre & Snape Maltings Concert Hall. Other notable
projects include Kingston School of Art, Royal College of Art, The London Library and Pembroke College Cambridge.

www.haworthtompkins.com

About Charcoalblue

Charcoalblue is the world’s leading, multi-national theater, acoustic and experience consultancy. Since our foundation in London in 2004, we have grown to a cohesive and collaborative team across six international studios in the UK, USA, and Australia, delivering projects to every corner of the globe. Working in partnership with leading architects and arts clients, Charcoalblue provides strategic consultancy and design services for innovative auditoria and technical systems, balanced acoustics, and state-of-the-art experiences, such as immersive environments for cinema, broadcast, and event spaces. Charcoalblue’s world-class cultural and education portfolio include the Stirling Prize-winning Everyman Theatre in Liverpool, Sydney Theatre Company in Australia, and St Ann’s Warehouse in Brooklyn, with recent projects completed in North America including the Perelman Performing Arts Center in New York City, Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago; Massey Hall at Allied Music Centre in Toronto; and Thaden School in Bentonville.

To learn more about Charcoalblue, visit: www.charcoalblue.com

About ARC

ARC is a design firm that creates visionary spaces with the power to produce lasting change for people and communities. Our diverse and passionate team brings dynamic design, leading-edge sustainability practices, and an inclusive creative approach to every project. Clients are central to our process: they’re trusted, long-term partners who play a key role in shaping spaces that move them forward. For more than 50 years, we have partnered with leading organizations across arts and education to design spaces that yield spectacular results — bold, meaningful environments that inspire, endure, and challenge the world of today to aspire to a better tomorrow.