

Hello! You've probably been in Dillingham before. As the home of IC's Department of Theater Arts, it is one of the college's cultural centers. However, the performing arts didn't always have such a nice home, and for the longest time, they had to share the space they had. Come learn about the history of the building that has made the IC theater program into the world-class institution it is today. Welcome to another episode of Ithaca College: Then and Now.

Construction on the performing arts building began in 1966 and was completed in 1968. The new building was dedicated on April 12, 1969, though it had yet to receive a name. In October 1973, the administration chose to name the performing arts center after Ithaca's new president emeritus, Howard Dillingham, the man who had presided over the move to South Hill and the creation of the new campus.

Dillingham was among the last big structures built in the great construction era of the 1960s. Costing about three point eight million dollars, it was one of the most expensive, too. By comparison, Williams cost less than two million dollars, and Friends cost a mere two hundred fifty thousand!

When first built, Dillingham stood alone, at campus' westerly edge. Today, while Smiddy Hall, The Center for Health Sciences, and the Peggy Ryan Williams Center have filled in the spaces around Dillingham, it remains an imposing feature of West Campus.

It didn't take long after Dillingham opened for students to put it to use. On January 22, 1969, the theater department opened its first show in the new building, a production of Pirandello's *Enricho IV*.

Dillingham was a great improvement over the Little Theater, IC's performance venue on the downtown campus. Whereas the Little Theater only had one, fourteen-foot deep stage, Dillingham had two theaters, the Main Theater, now called the Hoerner Theater after George Hoerner, former Associate professor of Drama, and the Arena Theater, now called the Clarke Theater or the Black Box. While they have been improved and renovated over the years, today these theaters are mostly the same as they were when they were first built.

Until recently, Dillingham's north side featured a small patio and a simple, wide concrete staircase. In 2008, the construction of the Peggy Ryan Williams Center caused the side of Dillingham to be remodeled. The Job Hall annex was added under where the old staircase was, and a new staircase, part of a new terraced courtyard, was installed.

To facilitate moving between the buildings in inclement weather, the college also constructed a suspended walkway connecting Dillingham's north side to the new Peggy Ryan Williams Center.

Finally, the college made small aesthetic changes, such as replacing the old wood and iron fences with steel and glass, to make Dillingham match its new neighbor.

Renovations occurred inside Dillingham as well. In the 1960s, the building's lobby had a set of elegant iron gates that separated the waiting area, called the red carpet, from the ticket booth and entryway. Today, these gates are no more, and the once clean walls of the lobby are covered with the posters of plays that IC alums have worked on after college. Perhaps the biggest internal change to the building was the addition of an elevator shaft, making the building more handicap accessible.

Originally, the theater department shared Dillingham with the Radio and TV department, and later, the film department. The theater department had the upstairs, while the burgeoning communications school controlled the downstairs studios. After the Park School of Communications was built in 1989, the theater department took over the TVR sound stages, and today these studios are used for classes and student theater performances. While some outside departments still have a presence there, Dillingham is at last almost exclusively in the hands of the theater program.

Since they were first used in 1969, the Dillingham Fountains have become one of the most iconic parts of the South Hill campus. In 2008, the fountains, which were leaking as many as 20,000 gallons per day, desperately needed renovations. Today, the fountains, newly surrounded by a glass fence, remain an indelible feature of the Ithaca College landscape.

Do you have any memories of Dillingham? Did you ever see or work on a play there? Please post your thoughts and experiences in the comments section of this video so we can preserve them for future Bombers. This has been another episode of Ithaca College: Then and Now. Thanks for watching and see you next time!