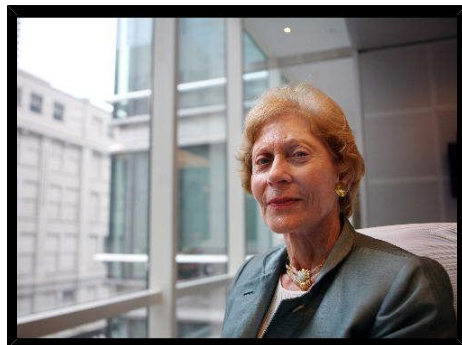




## Kaufman's \$8 Million Helps Tidy N.Y. Arts Center, Merkin Hall

By Patrick Cole



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Aug. 6 (Bloomberg) -- When Elaine Kaufman walked through the Manhattan-based arts education and performance center named after her, she noticed worn carpeting, long lines for the cramped bathrooms and a lobby design that was stuck in the 1970s.

So she and her husband, Henry, founder of investment management firm Henry Kaufman & Co., chipped in \$8 million to help renovate the Kaufman Center by restoring its concrete and steel panel facade, sprucing up the lobby and adding space for events and rehearsals.

The center's 457-seat Merkin Concert Hall will get reupholstered seats and new carpets. Work on the \$17 million project, designed by architect Robert A.M. Stern, started in May and is expected to be completed for a

Jan. 8, 2008 opening night celebration.

The daughter of German immigrants who fled the tyranny of Adolf Hitler, the Bronx-born Kaufman, 72, talked to me recently about how she and her husband divvy up the donation decision-making.

Cole: What bothered you about the look of the Kaufman Center?

Kaufman: Back in 2005, we felt the building needed some updating. Nothing had been done on the lower floors, and it was getting kind of shabby-looking. I spoke with Lydia Kontos, the Kaufman Center's executive director, and told her that since we were contemplating renovation, I would give them \$8 million. She was flabbergasted.

History of Giving

Cole: You and your husband have given away tens of millions of dollars to different institutions, including New York University and the Whitney Museum of American Art. What motivates you?

Kaufman: My mother was from Bavaria in Germany. My father was from outside Heidelberg. They were generous in giving to local organizations. For them, it was good to give to people who were worse off than yourself, and that followed me through life.

Cole: When did you get involved in philanthropy?

Kaufman: My husband and I started more than 20 years ago. The first major gift was to New York University, where he went to school. We have given about \$20 million to the university over the years. The Henry Kaufman Management Center at New York University is named after my husband.

Cole: Do the two of you make these decisions together or separately?

Kaufman: Some of them he makes on his own. The major gifts we talk about together. It isn't a case of one-two-three, let's write a check. The New York University gift he discussed with me. A \$10 million gift he made to the International Institute of Education he did on his own.

Home for the Arts

Cole: When it comes to the Kaufman Center, where you have served on the board, do you make the call about donations?

Kaufman: Yes. I'll talk to him, but I usually start the discussion.

Cole: The Kaufman Center is a home for the arts. I'm guessing you're a music lover.

Kaufman: Yes, I took piano lessons when I was 9 years old until my senior year of high school. I wasn't great at it. I didn't like practicing. Sometimes I take out some music and play. I like Chopin and Rachmaninoff.

The Kaufman Center is at 129 W. 67th St. Information: +1-212-501-3303;  
<http://www.kaufman-center.org> .

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*Last Updated: August 6, 2007 00:21 EDT*



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