

A perfect home for sounds of America

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Editorial Board

What better fit for the town-gown alliance of Austin and the University of Texas than a top-tier research center for the abundant variety of American music?

Austin is many things today: the state capital, a high-tech center, an environmental gem, a slacker haven. But its music scene continues to be its most widely known touchstone. From PBS' Austin City Limits to the Southwest by Southwest music and film festival, Austin is drenched in music.

It seems a natural progression for the University of Texas School of Music -- already an elite division of the teeming university -- to house a research center for the study of American music in all its forms, varieties and aspects.

UT's effort to push itself onto the top rung of public university music schools is ambitious. But it has a running start on fund-raising, a region devoted to music

of all types and a cultural environment that must be attractive to the country's top musicians.

From string quartets to bar room blues, from rich orchestral arrangements to the lonesome wail of Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Austin has become a spiritual home to the grand scope of American music. It is fertile ground to grow a music center worthy to be ranked among the best in the nation.

What makes the new Center for American Music so exciting is its reach. It won't be devoted to the intensely practical or the purely theoretical. Nor will it be focused only on classical or jazz or pop, but it will embrace the entire range of American music.

The plan also is for the research center to include the many ancillary aspects of the country's music scene: its history, business, legal, cultural and technical landscapes. And there

are plans for a University of Texas recording label.

Already the school has accumulated more than \$4 million toward its endowment goal of \$6 million. Thank Joe and Teresa Lozano Long for that. Their \$3 million gift led the way toward the larger fund-raising goal. UT intends to build on that solid foundation and attract a string ensemble to put the school on the national map.

Texas is world famous for its outstanding music and musicians. From Bob Wills' western swing to the "Brown Sound" popularized by Little Joe Hernandez to Van Cliburn's exquisite piano-playing, Texas has long been the breeding ground for American music and the artists who compose and play it.

Texas is closely identified with the music that makes America sing, and it is exciting that UT is building on that identity to create a world-class research center.