

THE SCHUSTER CENTER

“The curtain has risen *on a **new era for the arts** in the Miami Valley.*”

— *The Dayton Daily News heralding the opening of the Schuster Center, 13 April 2003.*



Before the construction of the Schuster Center at the corner of Second and Main Streets, the site was the home of Rike's, one of Dayton's most successful regional department store chains. The Rike-Kumler Co., founded in 1853, opened its flagship store here in 1912. The store is pictured here in its declining years in the 70s. It would go through a series of mergers and name changes before shuttering in 1992.

Image: TheDepartmentStoreMuseum.org.



The Rike building is demolished in 1999 to make way for the new Schuster Performing Arts Center.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



Workers stand atop a steel beam during construction of the Schuster at the turn of the millennium. Visible in the background at right is the 1931 Mutual Home Building, now Liberty Tower, Dayton's only set-back-style Art Deco high-rise. Also visible at lower left is Elder-Beerman, for decades Rike's chief regional competitor. In 2002, the store would close, making it Dayton's last downtown department store. Elder-Beerman would outlive Rike's by only another quarter-century before announcing its liquidation due to bankruptcy in 2018.

Image: VictoriaTheatre.com.



Concert time in the completed six-story Mead Theatre with its raised, fiber-optic ceiling mimicking the starry night sky on the eve of the Wright Brothers' first flight on 16 December 1903, one hundred years before the Schuster's opening.

Image: VictoriaTheatre.com.



Patrons converge in the sunlit Kettering Wintergarden, where planted palms enliven the space.

Image: VicoriaTheatre.com.



The completed complex, viewed here from Main Street, outside the Wintergarden. Partially visible at right is the attached office and condominium tower.

Image: VicoriaTheatre.com.



The Schuster Center is home to the Dayton Opera and Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. Aside from offering traditional symphonic, operatic, and ballet shows, facilities are flexible and permit a range of entertainment. Other venues include live-orchestrated exhibitions of classic films, contemporary music concerts, and touring Broadway shows.

Image: VicoriaTheatre.com.

“When the Victoria reopened in 1990, it **substantially changed the landscape** for the arts in the community. Arguably, the first few years of the '90s **set the stage for the Schuster.**”

— Mark Light, former Arts Center Foundation president in the Dayton Daily News, 13 April 2003.