

# PITTSBURGH OPERA

*For Immediate Release*

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**Pittsburgh Opera Seeks LEED Certification for New Headquarters**

*The oldest building in Pittsburgh and the first opera company in the US to seek certification*

**Pittsburgh, PA**...As part of its ongoing mission to enrich Pittsburgh and the tri-state area, [Pittsburgh Opera](#) recently began a new [green initiative](#) committed to environmental stewardship and ongoing sustainability. The primary goal of the initiative is to obtain the [US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design \(LEED\) Operations & Maintenance Certification](#) for the Opera's new headquarters, the historic 45,000 square-foot George Westinghouse Air Brake Factory in the city's Strip District

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The building, originally built in 1870 by George Westinghouse, Jr. to house his revolutionary Air Brake Factory, will be the oldest building in Pittsburgh to achieve LEED certification. Pittsburgh Opera will also be the first opera company in the United States to earn a certification. The Company plans to submit for certification by the end of 2009.

"To be the oldest building in Pittsburgh with LEED certification and the first opera company certified in the US will be an amazing achievement," said Pittsburgh Opera [General Director Christopher Hahn](#). "We are delighted to be at the forefront of the environmental movement in our community."

Many new buildings in the Pittsburgh area have been certified as new construction projects, but very few existing buildings have achieved certification. The oldest building currently certified in Pittsburgh is the 113-year-old Carriage House Children's Center, Inc / Wightman School Community Building in Squirrel Hill, built 26 years after the Opera's new headquarters.

Limited certification of existing buildings is attributed in part to the difficulty of bringing existing structures up to the US Green Building Council's tough environmental standards as well as the required long-term operations and maintenance planning.

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The Opera's headquarters has already been fitted with several green elements, including occupancy sensors to conserve electricity, window shades to help with decreased heating and cooling costs, recycled office materials, the use of green cleaning supplies and the reuse of materials, such as the wood from a renovated staircase used to create a conference room table. The Company will also earn a LEED point for its employee wellness program from Highmark in collaboration with The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust Shared Services.

Pittsburgh Opera has engaged Evolve environment::architecture, a local environmental design and green practices consulting firm to assist with the certification and will be hiring an ongoing commissioning agent to help the Company plan for the long-term sustainability of the building.

## **A History of the Pittsburgh Opera's Headquarters**

The Westinghouse Air Brake Company was established by American entrepreneur and engineer George Westinghouse, Jr. in 1869. The company manufactured a conveyance braking system actuated by compressed air that revolutionized the train brake industry. In 1870, Westinghouse constructed his first Air Brake Plant on the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Liberty Avenue in Pittsburgh.

In 1881, Westinghouse Machine Company began manufacturing in the building after the Air Brake Company moved to a new facility in the City of Allegheny.

In 1906, Pittsburgh Screw and Bolt Company occupied the building, creating a machine shop and blacksmith on the Spring Way alley side of the facility and a machine shop and stock room on the Liberty Avenue side of the facility.

Other tenants in the 1900s included the Otto Milk Company and Civic Light Opera, which used the facility to build theater sets. Vulcan Motor Trucks also advertised on the office section of the building.

In 1990, RedZone Robotics bought the building, and in collaboration with the Department of Energy and experts from several universities, built the world's toughest robot designed to take photos inside the reactor building of a nuclear power plant, and in the event of a disaster, push its way through the rubble, clearing paths to help people escape quickly.

In 2001, Mind Over Media, in partnership with National Development Company of Pennsylvania, LLC paid \$1.475 million for the historic facility and spent more than \$1 million to renovate the interior and exterior.

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In 2008, Pittsburgh Opera purchased the historic building for \$2.5 million and budgeted an additional \$3.5 million for renovations and improvements. To cover the cost of the building, the renovations and to establish a maintenance endowment for long-term maintenance, the Opera launched a capital campaign to raise at least \$8 million by the end of 2009.

Pittsburgh Opera is expected to submit for the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Existing Building Certification by the end 2009.

## **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)**

[Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design \(LEED\)](#) is an internationally-recognized green building certification system that verifies a building or community was designed and built using strategies for improving performance in the areas of energy savings, water efficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

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Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), LEED provides building owners and operators a concise framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.

Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum levels of LEED green building certification are awarded based on the total number of points earned within each LEED category. LEED can be applied to all building types including new construction, commercial interiors, core & shell developments, existing buildings, homes, neighborhood developments, schools and retail facilities.

## **The U.S. Green Building Council**

[The U.S. Green Building Council](#) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community of corporations, builders, universities, government agencies and other nonprofit organizations working toward the goal environmental sustainability through making green buildings available to everyone within a generation.

Originally established in 1993, the Council has grown to more than 17,000 member companies and organizations, a comprehensive family of LEED green building rating systems, an expansive educational offering, the industry's popular Greenbuild International Conference and Expo and a network of 78 local chapters, affiliates and organizing groups.

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*[Pittsburgh Opera](#) celebrates its 71<sup>st</sup> season in 2009-10 with [Eugene Onegin](#), [Falstaff](#), [The Rape of Lucretia](#), [Carmen](#) and [The Marriage of Figaro](#). In addition to its mainstage productions, Pittsburgh Opera produces a range of programs to engage and enrich the community with more than 20,000 students, families and educators participating in its educational events annually. The internationally renowned Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program is among the country's top five training centers for rising opera stars and the company's newly designed administrative and rehearsal space, housed in a 139-year-old air brake factory in the city's Strip District, provides space for events ranging from free community Brown Bag concerts to concert recitals by world-class opera singers.*

*Beginning in August 2009, single tickets for as little as \$10*

*2009-2010 season subscriptions now for as little as \$21*

*For ticket information visit our website [www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org) or call (412) 281-0912*

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