

PITTSBURGH OPERA

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Pittsburgh Opera announces million-dollar Commonwealth grant *Completion of Kresge challenge grant is next step in capital campaign*

Pittsburgh, PA... [Pittsburgh Opera](#) announced today a Capital Budget Redevelopment Assistance grant of \$1 million presented by Governor Edward Rendell in a ceremony at the Allegheny County Court House. The grant comes just two weeks after the launch of the public phase of the capital campaign for the Opera's new Strip District home.

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Pittsburgh Opera has now received pledges of \$7.7 million toward its capital campaign. [Christopher Hahn](#), Pittsburgh Opera General Director, reported that with the Governor's grant, the campaign is approaching its original \$8 million goal. He credited the Governor as well as support from the Senate and House Republican and Democratic Caucuses, the Board of Directors and foundations for the campaign's success to date.

"We're very close to completing our campaign; however, \$700,000 of the pledged amount is a challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation and depends on public support. We must raise an additional \$600,000 from individuals, businesses, and foundations by December 31, 2009 to meet the Kresge Foundation challenge."

[Michele Fabrizi](#), Co-Chair of the Opera Board and Capital Campaign Chair, explained, "We are now turning to the community to follow the Governor's and Legislative Caucuses' lead and help us raise the remaining dollars. While this is a challenging time to raise funds, we feel it is a reachable goal. Many community leaders have already helped because it's an investment that brings so much return.

"Not only will the resources of the building allow us to better prepare the performances at the Benedum, this building also opens up a whole new way for the community to experience all the artistry that is part of opera - to learn firsthand about the music, sets,

(more)

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costumes, makeup, lighting. It truly makes all this accessible to everyone in the community. Beyond that, the building offers rehearsal and performance space for other local arts groups that don't have a home of their own."

The Pittsburgh Opera's search for a new home began when the Cultural District announced it had plans for the building at 801 Penn Avenue that had been the Pittsburgh Opera's home for 10 years. A brief four months after the company was told it had to find new headquarters, the perfect building was identified in the heart of Pittsburgh's Strip District.

George Westinghouse's 1869 air brake factory, at [2425 Liberty Avenue](#), already had an airy second-floor office space, a parking garage and reception area on the first floor. The vast unused space on the west side of the building has been transformed into a rehearsal space the size of the Benedum stage. A flexible performance/reception space was built out on the south side including a catering kitchen and coaching studios. The first-floor work space on the east side has become a spacious costume shop and wig/makeup area.

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"This building is completely changing the way we do business," explained General Director Hahn. "We have this incredible bright, open space where all of our artistic and administrative staff can exchange ideas and work together. We now run fully-staged rehearsals and full orchestra rehearsals in our own building. And the space allows us to invite the public in to experience rehearsals, artist concerts, education workshops and family programs."

With the price tag for this historic gem at \$2.5 million, the company established a capital campaign goal of at least \$8 million to cover necessary improvements at \$3.5 million as well as a maintenance endowment that would not tap the Opera's annual operating funds.

[Pittsburgh Opera](#), now celebrating its 70th season, is one of America's leading opera companies. It produces a range of programs, from mainstage productions to free community concerts to intimate cabarets. Pittsburgh Opera's internationally renowned resident artist program is among the country's top five training centers for rising opera stars. More than 20,000 students, families and educators participate in Pittsburgh Opera educational events annually. The company's newly designed administrative and rehearsal space is housed in a 140-year-old air brake factory in the city's Strip District.

Subscriptions for as little as \$41. Single tickets for as little as \$16. For ticket information visit our website www.pittsburghopera.org or call (412) 281-0912

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