

**Embargoed until Nov. 7, 2021**

Chris Cox, Director of Marketing and Communications  
412.281.0912 ext. 217  
[ccox@pittsburghopera.org](mailto:ccox@pittsburghopera.org)

## Pittsburgh Opera Announces \$5MM Gift from Francois Bitz

PITTSBURGH, PA–

Pittsburgh Opera announces the largest individual gift in the company's 83-year history – a \$5MM gift from Pittsburgh Opera Board Member, tech entrepreneur and real estate developer Francois Bitz.

Bitz, who co-founded FORE Systems Inc, has been called one of “the first superstars of Pittsburgh’s tech renaissance.” He is currently building the [Penn 23 condo project](#) in the Strip District, across the street from Pittsburgh Opera’s Headquarters.

“A gift of this magnitude has transformational implications for Pittsburgh Opera,” says General Director Christopher Hahn. “In recognition and deep appreciation, we are naming our Strip District headquarters the **Bitz Opera Factory**. The new name nicely refers to the building’s past life as the Westinghouse Air Brake Factory while acknowledging its present role as a vibrant center for the creation of opera.”

“I have always been inspired and intrigued by the power opera has to bring great stories and great music together, said Bitz. “My hope is that my gift will encourage others to follow my example to strongly support this world-class organization. Pittsburgh Opera adds immeasurably to our region’s famous quality of life and helps to attract the many talented and creative workers the city needs to continue to progress and thrive.”

Bitz’s gift is part of Pittsburgh Opera’s \$50MM Comprehensive Campaign. The campaign, co-chaired by Michele Atkins, Dr. Lisa Cibik, Michele Fabrizi, and Diana Reid, is called [Forever](#). *Forever* has already raised \$23.4MM of its \$50MM goal. Its objectives are to:

- Promote Pittsburgh Opera’s cornerstones of Art, Community, and Resilience
- Make Pittsburgh Opera a model of entrepreneurship and inclusion
- Secure Pittsburgh Opera’s place as a cultural treasure for future generations

People can contribute to *Forever* through:

- New and increased yearly giving to Pittsburgh Opera’s Annual Fund, which can be made online at [pittsburghopera.org/forever](http://pittsburghopera.org/forever)
- Planned Giving through Pittsburgh Opera’s [Monteverdi Society](#), for legacy building estate gifts and bequest commitments
- Special Gifts – exceptional philanthropic gifts custom-tailored to the donor’s individual preferences; please contact Pittsburgh Opera at 412-281-0912, ext. 259

*Contributions to Pittsburgh Opera are tax-deductible. The official registration and financial information of Pittsburgh Opera may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

*Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 83rd season in 2021-22. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, outstanding educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn’s leadership.*