



AUSTIN OPERA UNVEILS EXCITING PLANS FOR ITS FUTURE, ANCHORED BY A NEW HOME

The company's new administrative and rehearsal home will feature a new performance venue providing year-round programming opportunities for multiple Austin arts organizations

(Austin, TX—Tuesday, October 8, 2024) Austin Opera today welcomed its community to the public phase of a capital campaign that will support the establishment of a new company headquarters, the next major step in the company's evolution as an essential partner in Austin's performing arts scene.

The company unveiled the site for its new home, a 16,000-square-foot programming, rehearsal, and administrative hub located at 5811 Trade Center Drive, a landmark building created by the engineers of the Congress Avenue Bridge expansion. The building will be retrofitted to include a 195-seat performance theater and rehearsal space, teaching and practice studios, a costume shop, a conference center, outdoor event space, and the Opera's administrative offices. When it opens to the public in fall 2025, the building will enable Austin Opera to engage its community year-round with a broader range of programming, while also addressing the performing arts community's critical need for affordable performance and rehearsal space in Austin.

"The establishment of this new performance center is a historic step for Austin Opera to expand our audience, secure a sustainable future, and provide essential spaces for the performing arts community in Austin," said **Annie Burridge**, Austin Opera's General Director and CEO. "I couldn't be more excited to work with our community to build an inclusive new cultural hub for our thriving city."

To date, the company has secured \$3.67 million of its \$7.5 million capital campaign goal to purchase and retrofit the building. The new performance center will bear the names of the lead contributors to the campaign, **Sarah and Ernest Butler**. Among Austin's most generous philanthropists, the Butlers have been closely involved with many of the city's arts organizations since moving to the city in 1969. In 2021, they created a \$3 million endowment at Austin Opera to fund Spanish language programming at the company and establish the first Curator for Hispanic and Latinx programming in the U.S opera field. They have also endowed Music Director **Timothy Myers'** position with the company and the Butler Masterclass Series, which brings together visiting Austin Opera artists and students at the University of Texas Butler School of Music.

“We are proud to support the latest innovative undertaking of Austin Opera. This new Performance Center, which will bear our names, will help secure a sustainable future for opera in Austin and enable numerous cultural institutions to extend their important work into the community” said **Dr. and Mrs. Butler**.

Additional Founding Funders of the capital campaign to date include Austin Opera Chair Susanne Tetzlaff and her husband Dr. Eric Tiblier, as well as past Chair Jeff Kodosky and his wife Gail. “We are so grateful to Sarah and Ernest Butler for their unwavering support for Austin Opera,” said Board Chair **Susanne Tetzlaff**, “which has in turn inspired unanimous Board support for this transformative project. I am also thankful to my predecessor, Immediate Past Chair Jeff Kodosky, and Gail for joining Eric and me in providing leadership-level giving for a venue that will truly serve as an anchor for the classical music community in Austin. We look forward to welcoming many others to partner with us in the realization of this dream project for the cultural community!”

A NEW HOME FOR AUSTIN OPERA

The Opera’s new home is a landmark building designed by GSC Architects for J.D. Abrams L.P., a heavy highway construction company that has been in business since 1966 and was responsible for the construction of the expansion of Austin’s Congress Avenue Bridge. Constructed in 2016 as the firm’s Austin headquarters, the state-of-the-art, one-story building features 15,690 square feet of interior space, 17-foot ceilings ideal for rehearsals and performances of large groups of musicians and scenery, and a suite of fully furnished administrative offices including a large conference room equipped with A/V for in-person and remote meetings. Additional amenities include a large outdoor reception area and 300 evening and weekend parking spaces. Under the direction of project contractors Liza Wimberley and Austin Opera trustee Tina Barrett, owners of Waterlily Homes, Austin Opera will retrofit the space to add a 195-seat black box theater, four rehearsal and teaching studios, and a costume shop to service the needs of multiple Austin artists and organizations. Travis Young, Founder of Studio Momentum Architects, is the architect for the retrofit, working with acoustician Richard Boner and lighting designer and architect James Sale.

When its new headquarters opens to the public in fall 2025, Austin Opera will expand its programmatic and educational offerings to include performances, workshops, masterclasses, and education programs.

“Our new home will be a hub that affords us the opportunity to explore new repertoire, performance formats, and genres, while giving artists from Austin and beyond a beautiful space that fosters creativity of all kinds. It embodies our innovative spirit and our desire to be a champion not only for opera, but for a wide range of experiences that bring people

together for the singularly thrilling experience of live performance,” said **Timothy Myers**, Austin Opera’s Sarah and Ernest Butler Music Director.

A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

The move to 5811 Trade Center Drive will place Austin Opera in the heart of the culturally diverse 78744 zip code. This area, currently home to the Opera’s long-term collaborators at the General Consulate of Mexico in Austin, currently lacks a performance venue of this scope.

Austin Opera has been working with the Consulate General of Mexico since 2021 when they created *Concerts at the Consulate*, a performance series spotlighting Latinx artists and Hispanic culture held at the Consulate. Now in its third year, the series spurred the establishment of the Butler Fund for Spanish Programming and the creation of a new role of Curator of Hispanic & Latinx Programming, held by Mexican mezzo-soprano **Claudia Chapa**.

“The location of Austin Opera’s new headquarters underlines our strong commitment to deepening our connection with the Latinx community. Our ongoing collaboration with the Mexican Consulate through *Concertos en el Consulado* has been the cornerstone of our efforts, and we are eagerly anticipating the ways in which our new home will contribute to enriching Austin’s cultural landscape,” Chapa said.

Austin Opera’s new venue will also serve as the home of the company’s Residency for Latinx Creatives, which provides Latinx composers and librettists resources and mentorship to develop works by and about the community. “We are placing our performance center at the heart of a community rich in cultural heritage and vibrant artistic expression, and we are eager to see how that will shape the new works that emerge from our residency program,” said Chapa.

A NEW LOOK

The company’s announcement also included the unveiling of a new look, part of a comprehensive rebranding designed by Playground, a leading visual storytelling, branding, and design firm with offices in Austin and New York City.

Playground created a look characterized by art and movement to form a graphic identity as alive as the art form of opera itself. Across print, digital, and broadcast mediums, a sophisticated, welcoming tone promises innovation, inclusivity, and inspiration with a tagline of “Austin Opera: It’s an experience.”

“For culturally curious individuals seeking innovative and inclusive operatic experiences, Austin Opera provides high-quality performances and educational programs that fuse the timeless elegance of classical opera with fresh interpretations, creating a dynamic cultural hub that welcomes and celebrates the diversity of Austin’s vibrant community,” said Enrique Ramirez of Playground Studio, also an Austin Opera Trustee. “This new brand identity represents an experience that is not only unique to the opera but to the vibrant and diverse rhythm of the city of Austin.”

PROJECT TIMELINE

June 10, 2024: Austin Opera took ownership of 5811 Trade Center Drive, Building One. Senior Vice President Lee Ellison and Brian Smith of Commercial Industrial Properties helped Austin Opera find and secure the landmark property.

September 3, 2024: Austin Opera administrative offices relocated to 5811 Trade Center

January 8, 2025: Retrofit construction set to begin on artistic wing of the building, including the new theater, rehearsal studios, and costume shop

October 2025: Anticipated opening of the Sarah and Ernest Butler Performance Center at Austin Opera

ABOUT AUSTIN OPERA

Austin Opera leverages the multidisciplinary, collaborative, and transcendent power of opera to increase the quality of life for its diverse community by bringing together local and national artists to create outstanding, meaningful operatic performances and experiences, partnering with local schools and community groups to provide robust, responsive educational programs that inspire and engage, and leading the development of new, innovative strategies that increase the scope and impact of the operatic medium in Austin and beyond.

Founded in May 1986, co-founders Joseph McClain and the late Dr. Walter Ducloux created a professional opera company dedicated to producing enriching operatic experiences for Central Texans. Over a 38-year history, Austin Opera has presented over 100 opera productions with coinciding engagement programs, enriched the lives of more than 200,000 children through arts programming, and developed robust partnerships with educational and nonprofit institutions across Central Texas to make opera accessible. In 2022, Austin Opera announced the Butler Fund for Spanish Programming to fund one Spanish language program each season and appoint a Curator of Hispanic and Latinx Programming, a new role dedicated to ensuring Hispanic and Latinx programming is represented across the company’s artistic platforms. Austin Opera is a Founding Resident Company of the 2,400-seat Long Center for the Performing Arts, proudly calling this venue home for its subscription season.

Under the visionary leadership of General Director & CEO **Annie Burrridge** and Music Director **Timothy Myers**, Austin Opera has reached new heights of artistic excellence, innovation, and impact.

The company serves more than 25,000 community members annually through a curated season at the Long Center for the Performing Arts, Opera ATX performances in unique venues across Austin, and community engagement programs, such as *Conductor Cues*, *Opera Overtures*, and *Masterclass with the Artists*, created to provide unique opportunities for audiences to connect with the music, the artists, and the creative process behind each production.

In 2021, Austin Opera partnered with the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin to create *Concerts at the Consulate*, a performance series to spotlight Latinx artists and Hispanic culture held at the Consulate. Now in its third year, the series spurred the establishment of the Butler Fund for Spanish Programming and the creation of a new role of Curator of Hispanic & Latinx Programming, held by Mexican mezzo-soprano **Claudia Chapa**. The fund launched with *Bella Noche de Música* (2023), a free-of-admission concert featuring Latinx artists, mariachi, and the full Austin Opera Orchestra. The production aired on PBS during Hispanic Heritage Month and continues to air nationwide. The company then premiered the mariachi opera *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (2024) as part of its subscription series at the Long Center for the Performing Arts. The Opera ATX Residency for Latinx Creatives is developing and workshoping two new operas by Latinx creators over the next two seasons, *El rebozo* and *Ofrenda*.

Austin Opera works directly with educators in 15 local school districts and nonprofit organizations like Austin Public Library to make opera educational and entertaining for students of all ages, offering much of its programs free of charge. *Opera Treasure Chest* and *Access Opera* provide 15,000 students annually with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills-aligned curriculum and live opera.

Live from Indy Terrace, Austin Opera's digital channel, launched in March 2020. It offers on-demand broadcasts of *Concerts at the Consulate*, *Conductor Cues with Timothy Myers*, and *Opera Overtures*; features world-class artists in performance, in-depth interviews, and exciting behind-the-scenes content. With the success of *Live from Indy Terrace*, Austin Opera has filmed concerts for Austin PBS and PBS affiliates, including *An All-Star Concert* (2021), *Bella Noche de Música* (2023), and *Ryan Speedo Green in Concert* (2023), to bring opera into the homes of millions of people across the U.S.

Austin Opera anchors Austin's cultural ecosystem by providing employment, mentorship, and career opportunities to artists throughout the region.

To learn more about Austin Opera, visit austinopera.org or follow along on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#) at @austinopera.

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