



For Immediate Release

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Indianapolis Opera Launches Campaign to Acquire, Improve Historic Basile Opera Center

Grants from the Lilly Endowment and Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation Anchor Effort

Indianapolis, IND – The Indianapolis Opera (IO) is pleased to announce the launch of the Campaign for the Basile Opera Center and its plans to acquire, improve, and sustainably operate the historic Meridian Kessler landmark – making it a permanent fixture for the Opera and the broader Central Indiana arts and cultural community.

Anchoring the successful launch of the Campaign are grants of \$1.5 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. and \$500,000 from the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, Inc., alongside major gifts from the Indianapolis Foundation, Frank and Katrina Basile, Arnie Hanish, Claudette and Larry Einhorn, and Garry and Louise Fredericksen. In total, the Opera has received more than \$2.5 million in commitments, enabling it to reach nearly two-thirds of its \$4 million goal.

The Opera has called the former Greek Orthodox Church home for the last decade, since its purchased by Indianapolis business leader, community advocate, and Midtown resident Bill Oesterle. Thanks to the generosity of Oesterle, the Basile's, and many others, the Opera has thrived in the space – making more than \$1 million in improvements and hosting countless performances and events. As the Campaign enters its next phase, planning is underway alongside partners Browning Day and Meyer Najem Construction for an additional \$1 million in exterior and interior investments, including preservation of the historic carillon and façade, accessibility and life safety upgrades, and enhanced artist and guest Amenities.

“The Opera is ecstatic to affirm its stewardship of this exceptional facility and further its commitment to Midtown, Indianapolis, and the arts community,” said Matt Mindrum, Indianapolis Opera Board President. “Thank you to our supporters for helping us launch this Campaign so successfully. We can’t wait to share the new and improved Basile Opera Center with our patrons, partners, and neighbors in the years to come.”

In its 46th year serving the Indianapolis community, the Opera has recently experienced a renaissance, presenting diverse and intimate opera productions to strong reviews and growing audiences. The Opera has enjoyed sound and stable leadership from its board and General Director David Starkey, delivering four consecutive years of operating surpluses. Despite the many challenges presented this year by the COVID-19 pandemic, IO and its talented artists have continued to create, engage, and share the power of opera with the Central Indiana community, as exemplified by this fall’s made-for-streaming production of Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*.

Beyond the Opera, this project will enhance the vitality of one of Indy’s most diverse and historic

communities, and preserve and enhance some of the city's most unique rehearsal, performance, and event spaces at a time when each is in short supply. The Basile Opera Center has welcomed countless cultural and community organizations over the years, including the resident Indiana Music Education Association, Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, Indianapolis Movement Arts Collective, and Angela Brown Vocal Studio. The planned operating endowment will ensure that these and other organizations of all types and sizes can access and utilize the Center affordably.

“Indianapolis is home to more than 70 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, which enhance our lives and fuel \$440 million of annual economic impact,” said Julie Goodman, President and CEO of the Arts Council of Indianapolis. “In these uniquely challenging times, we applaud Indianapolis Opera’s continued leadership and efforts to preserve, enhance, and share this beautiful and flexible facility with our sector and our city.”

The Opera is seeking the support of its patrons, arts lovers, and community advocates to help preserve and enhance the future of the Opera and this unique and valuable community asset. Those interested in making a contribution should visit indyopera.org/BOC.

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