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# LIVING

Intricate brickwork is one of the calling cards of the former Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church building, which now houses the Indianapolis Opera. BROWNING DAY/PROVIDED

# ON A HIGH NOTE

OPERA RESTORING HISTORIC MIDTOWN CHURCH



**Domenica Bongiovanni**  
Indianapolis Star  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The next chapter for a 60-year-old landmark former church in Meridian-Kessler looks bright. Its longtime musical tenant wants to buy the building and make the relationship permanent.

The Indianapolis Opera began holding concerts in the former Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 4011 N. Pennsylvania St., more than 10 years ago. Since then, the opera has matured into a company that produces famous repertoire in a resourceful and nimble way. Its headquarters at the former church, now called the Basile Opera Center, have welcomed all manner of arts and other community groups to use the facility.

Now, the opera would like to grow the hub into a midtown arts anchor. To do that, it has

See **OPERA**, Page 2E

**Indianapolis vocalist Angela Brown, left, has held vocal studio classes in the Indianapolis Opera building.** INDIANAPOLIS OPERA CO./PROVIDED

## New food hall will feature pizza, pastries, PB&J

**Cheryl V. Jackson**  
Indianapolis Star  
USA TODAY NETWORK

New York-style pizza, a PB&J and cereal bar, and a fish market are among the offerings announced Tuesday for the upcoming AMP food hall at 16 Tech, opening in March.

The 40,000-square-foot European-style market will feature food and produce from local retailers with seven restaurant stalls, 14 concepts housed in ship-

ping containers, a community prep kitchen for food trucks and catering companies, a culinary incubator, an open-air bar, and a full-service restaurant. The complex will be managed by restaurant consultant Craig Baker.

The marketplace is part of the 50-acre district focused on innovation with flexible workspaces, housing, green space, and biking and walking trails. The district is bounded on the north by 16th Street and on the south by 10th Street between Indiana Avenue and White River/Fall Creek.

It will be the second food hall to open in Indianapolis this year following the January 5 launch of The Garage Food Hal at the Bottleworks District.

AMP will have communal seating for 350 for regular dining and 500 for special events post-COVID.

Tenants announced Tuesday are:

- Frankie's Pizza Parlor, selling New York-style pies from the folks behind Turchetti's Salumeria.
- Circle City Sweets, selling croissants, breads,

See **FOOD HALL**, Page 6E

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The former church provides rehearsal space for Indianapolis Opera's productions and other groups. INDIANAPOLIS OPERA CO. PHOTOS/PROVIDED

# Opera

Continued from Page 1E

launched a \$4 million capital campaign that will shore up the old church and preserve its modernist architecture that could be worthy of the National Register of Historic Places.

"This has been something that has been a dream and a desire of many in the community for well over 15 years," said David Starkey, the opera's general director. "We are in unprecedented times and very hopeful that we are able to have an unprecedented moment to fulfill this dream."

## How the church became a neighborhood fixture

When Holy Trinity sought to sell its building in the aughts, the opera was interested. While its biggest productions have been at Butler University's Schrott Center for the Arts and other large venues, its own headquarters was smaller. Before it moved, it resided at 250 E. 38th St.

Holy Trinity's church was ideal. As host of the annual Indy GreekFest, the location was already well known throughout the city. Completed in 1960, the building was a gorgeous example of modernist architecture designed by McGuire & Shook, Compton, Richey & Associates for a

congregation that began downtown at the turn of the century.

Its trademark 50-foot-tall bell tower communes with the highest nearby tree branches. Patterned, tanned brick makes up the exterior. Rooftop barrel vaults form an undulating ceiling inside the sanctuary, which is now a concert hall that can seat about 200. The arches call back to medieval Romanesque churches and even earlier Roman architecture, said Mark Dollase, vice president of preservation services for Indiana Landmarks. They frame a striking pattern of stained glass that lets colored light beam into the sanctuary.

"At this point, they weren't doing as much of the figural stained glass that you might typically think of in a historic church building," Dollase said. "But it was more sort of colored glass panels that let in different colors of light but are much more kind of a minimalist approach to the design that I also think is a hallmark of the mid-century modern design element."

In 2008, Holy Trinity moved to its current location at 106th Street and Shelborne Road in Carmel. That year, business leader Bill Oesterle bought it and planned to lease it to the opera. By then, it had become a neighborhood fixture.

"When it changed from being the Orthodox church and then was converted into the opera space, it was a relief," said Emma Clust, chair of the Land Use Committee for the Meridian-Kessler Neighborhood Association. She cited the struggle for neighborhoods to find new uses for aging church buildings that stand empty.

its capability and has served the opera and others very well."

The building and tower's brick masonry, along with the sealant and mortar, will be repaired as well, with help from Arsee Engineers, Davis wrote. Water has damaged the tower and vaulted roof over the years. Outdoors, renovations are planned for the landscape plantings, brick wall, courtyard walkways and building access.

The Basile Opera Center itself has the potential to see its fame rise in the future. While the Washington Park Historic District that surrounds the former church is on the National Register of Historic Places, the church building itself is considered "non-contributing" because it didn't add to the same historical time period as the early 20th-century homes. But Dollase said it could be individually eligible for the register if the opera chooses to pursue that route.

"We'll keep that line of communication open with the opera folks," he said.

## The building will be flexible for the community

The renovations and repairs will improve the quality of experiences for audience members and artists alike. Along with the opera, the Angela Brown Vocal Studio and Indianapolis Movement Arts Collective are among those who have used the midtown building.

Starkey said the building lends itself to flexible uses and not just performances. For example, the opera has been able to adapt its rehearsal hall, which is the church's former fellowship hall, into an event space or black box TV studio. It's where performers have recorded classes and streaming productions.

"We're hoping that people like ourselves that are learning about how to be available for their public can look at this building (in) that way. They could be inside, they could be outside, they could be both," Starkey said. "They could be here temporarily as they find out how to connect with this neighborhood or how they might test some things out here and be able to go to other neighborhoods. So it's an incubator, a performance space, a rehearsal space."

He hopes to have a grand reopening celebration once the pandemic has passed. Clust said many in the Meridian-Kessler neighborhood are opera patrons, and she would like to see the venue add more community-minded events after the pandemic.

Neighbors "love that it's an anchor and that it hasn't been changed or (been) redeveloped into a townhome," Clust said. "The stewards that have owned that property have maintained it in largely its original condition and respected the historic nature of the space. I think ultimately in the neighborhood, that's what (draws) a lot of people to Meridian-Kessler is the history and the appreciation for maintaining that history."

Contact IndyStar reporter *Domenica Bongiovanni* at 317-444-7339 or *d.bongiovanni@indystar.com*. Follow her on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter: *@domenicareports*.

## PUZZLE ANSWERS

### Crossword answer

L	I	S	T	E	D	S	P	A	M	F	R	E	E	E	F	R	E	M						
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### Jumble answer

SWITCH BREACH DONKEY  
INDIGO OPAQUE FALLEN

The entertaining children's doctor had a —

## BAG OF "PEDIATRICKS"

### Cryptoquip answer

WHEN YOU DREAM ABOUT REDDISH-BROWN-COLORED CARPENTRY BOARDS, I SUPPOSE THAT'S UMBER LUMBER SLUMBER.

### Sudoku answer

3	7	9	4	8	2	5	6	1
6	5	1	9	7	3	8	4	2
4	2	8	1	5	6	9	7	3
1	3	2	5	4	8	7	9	6
9	4	7	3	6	1	2	8	5
5	8	6	2	9	7	1	3	4
7	1	4	6	2	9	3	5	8
8	6	3	7	1	5	4	2	9
2	9	5	8	3	4	6	1	7



The former sanctuary is now a concert hall that can hold about 200 people.