

Rice University's Shepherd School of Music

Ground-breaking in September for new music and opera building



Rice University's Shepherd School of Music plans to break ground on a new music and opera building in September, pending completion of the funding initiative. The new structure designed by Allan Greenberg Architect LLC will be connected by a plaza to the school's current facility, Alice Pratt Brown Hall and will form Rice's Music and Performing Arts Center. The new building is expected to be open to students and the general public in July 2020.

The new center will be "a transformative addition to the Shepherd School, the opera program and the greater university," said Shepherd School Dean Robert Yekovich. The center will "energize Rice's campus at the west end of its Inner Loop," he said.

"The center will offer premium performance space for opera, chamber orchestra, chamber music and theater; meet the growing need for rehearsal and practice space; and provide a hallmark venue to attract and host high-profile speakers," Yekovich said.

"The new music and performing arts center represents our continuing aspirations for the ongoing success of the Shepherd

School and will take to an entirely new level our ability to serve more broadly as an arts and event venue for the Rice community and the city of Houston," Rice President David Leebron said.

Allan Greenberg Architect LLC, an architectural firm with offices in New York City and Alexandria, Va., has been engaged to create the 84,000-square-foot facility, which will house a three-tiered, 600-seat, European-style opera theater with an orchestra pit for 70 musicians.

"The opera house is a visual overture to prepare the audience to enter into the magical world conjured by the music, the story and the theatrical setting of the opera," said Allan Greenberg, principal designer for the project. "It facilitates a journey into the mind of the composer, in which the human voice gives breath to a living fantasy."

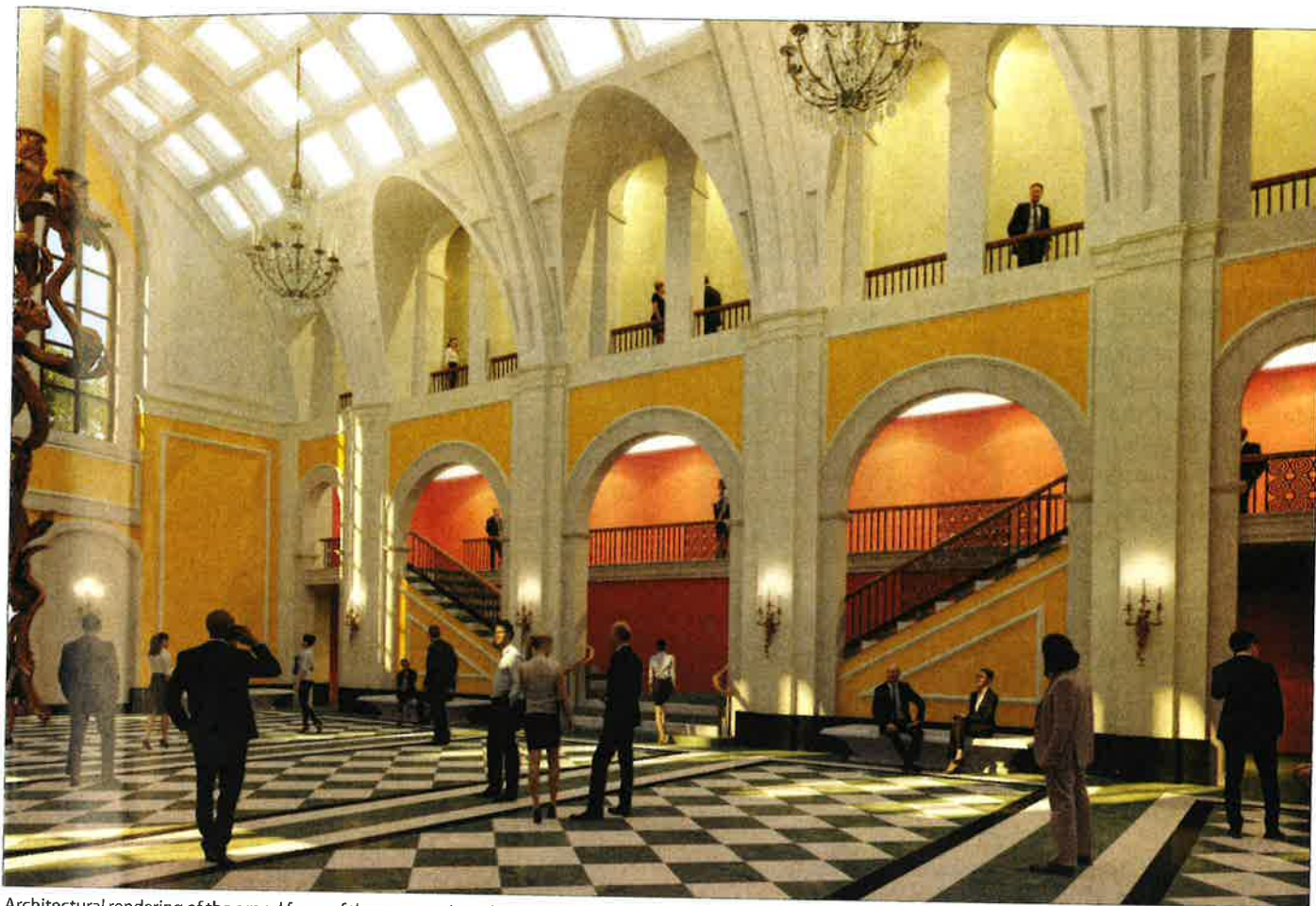
"Allan Greenberg is widely known as one of the premier classical designers in architecture," Yekovich said. "A shining example of his work is the Humanities Building on the Rice campus. Our team comprises Allan Greenberg Architect, Fisher Dachs Associates

and Threshold Acoustics and brings an unparalleled level of experience to this project that will serve our aspirations well."

Yekovich said the Shepherd School considers itself "very fortunate" to be located in a place where the arts "are so warmly embraced and generously supported."

Allan Greenberg Architect LLC was established in 1972 and has an international reputation for combining contemporary construction techniques with the best architectural traditions to create solutions that are both timeless and technologically progressive. Projects include master plans, feasibility studies, new construction, renovations, restorations, and interior and furniture design for academic, institutional, religious, commercial, residential and retail clients. Completed projects are found throughout the United States as well as in Europe and the Middle East.

Theater design will be led by Joshua Dachs of Fisher Dachs Associates, a New York-based theater planning and design firm with more than 40 years of experience in providing guidance to projects such as



RICE'S SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Architectural rendering of the grand foyer of the new music and opera building.

Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall and Alice Tully Hall, Radio City Music Hall, new opera houses in Toronto and St. Petersburg and multipurpose venues such as Houston's Hobby Center for the Performing Arts.

The Chicago-based firm Threshold Acoustics will provide acoustic direction under Scott Pfeiffer. Threshold has directed a number of large-scale projects, including Royal Festival Hall in London, the Music Center at Strathmore and the refurbishing of the Philadelphia Orchestra's home, the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Verizon Hall. The new Rice Opera House will feature a state-of-the-art "pin drop" acoustic experience created by Threshold Acoustics.

Houston's award-winning Linbeck Group will act as general contractor. Linbeck has overseen the construction of Rice's McMurtry College, Brochstein Pavilion and James Turrell's "Twilight Epiphany" Skyspace at Rice University's Suzanne Deal Booth Centennial Pavilion. Its other major projects include Fort Worth's Nancy Lee and Perry

R. Bass Performance Hall, the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts in San Antonio and Dallas's Winspear Opera House.

The Shepherd School's Opera Department is a selective program that enrolls just 36 singers per school year. Each student receives specialized individual attention from the internationally renowned opera and voice faculty members.

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Shepherd School Dean Robert Yekovich

The department's alumni have performed in top performance venues throughout the U.S. and abroad. Brenton Ryan and Nicholas Brownlee made their Metropolitan Opera debuts in 2016, and Lauren Snouffer and Jack Swanson offered debut performances with the Houston Symphony

Orchestra in 2017. Other alumni have been selected for highly prestigious development programs at some of the country's top opera houses. Ian Koziara is part of the New York Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, established to nurture the most talented young artists through training and performance opportunities. Frederick Ballentine and Allegra DeVita are part of the 2016-2017 Washington National Opera Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program.

Numerous alumni have also received top opera awards. Recent honorees include Ryan and Brownlee, who won Placido Domingo's Operalia, The World Opera Competition in 2016. Brownlee also won the Metropolitan National Council Auditions in 2015, and DeVita was a finalist. And Ben Edquist and Swanson won The William Matheus Sullivan Musical Foundation Award in 2016.

For more information on the Shepherd School Opera Department, visit their website: music.rice.edu/opera/index.shtml. ●