



For Immediate Release

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Belmont University, Nashville Opera Announce Epic Masterwork in New Performing Arts Center

New 1,700-seat venue set to open Fall 2021 with nationally broadcast 'Christmas at Belmont'; Inaugural season to include Richard Wagner epic 'Das Rheingold'

NASHVILLE, May 11, 2021 – As part of a preview of Nashville’s newest performing arts space, Belmont University and the Nashville Opera announced today that Richard Wagner’s masterwork “Das Rheingold” would close out the Opera’s 2021-22 season in the campus’ new performing arts center. Scheduled to open this fall, the new 1,700 seat venue will be hosting what is believed to be the first fully staged production of this monumental epic in Nashville. The performing arts center’s main concert hall, which is fashioned after traditional European opera houses, has a horseshoe shape and will be acoustically designed to provide an optimal listening experience to all audiences. In addition to supplying Belmont’s nationally renowned performing arts students with a unique learning environment, the new hall will also add another diamond to Music City’s ring of world class venues as it caters to diverse audiences with major concerts, plays, operas, special lectures and other performances.

“When we began construction two-and-a-half years ago, I expressed my sincere intention for this facility to be among the finest performing arts centers on any college campus in the world because that’s what our students deserve,” said Belmont President Dr. Bob Fisher. “Thanks to the good work of our architectural and construction teams, I believe even my wildest dreams for this venue are being exceeded. I can’t wait for our students and the broader Nashville community to experience all this performance hall has to offer, and I’m thrilled to have the Nashville Opera partner with us to premiere ‘Das Rheingold’ in this space.”

The grand opening of the new performing arts center is currently anticipated to occur with the Dec. 1 filming of the annual “Christmas at Belmont” concert, featuring more than 800 student musicians and vocalists in a performance nationally broadcast on PBS for the past 18 years.

Located between Belmont's Massey Performing Arts Center, Curb Event Center, Curb Café, Troutt Theater and McAfee Concert Hall, the new facility completes a performing arts district along Belmont Boulevard. Moreover, the new hall promises ultimate adaptability with design features that make it a perfect fit for a wide variety of functions, from both acoustic and amplified music concerts to theater and dance performances and broadcast events.

ESa's David Minnigan, the principal architect on the project, added, "The acoustic design of the new main hall draws upon the rich history of the form of the beloved opera houses of the world, including Buenos Aires – Teatro Colon, Teatro Alla Scala in Milan and Paris' Palais Garnier to name a few. At the same time, the latest concepts and technologies in multi-use hall acoustic design have been fully integrated into the neoclassical architectural language that is dominant at Belmont University. One prominent example is the hall's dome; traditionally a plaster element, this ornate ceiling element in the auditorium has been made sound transparent, allowing for extended room reverberation for orchestral concerts. Above the dome is a series of acoustic features that can be selectively deployed to fine-tune the acoustics for specific programs — from fully amplified concerts to orchestral, opera and theater — all without changing the aesthetics of the room. We look forward to the upcoming commissioning and acoustic tuning sessions with our acoustic and theatrical design partners (akustiks and Theatre Projects) that will start later this summer and continue into the fall."

The performing arts center also extends Belmont's desire to be "Nashville's University" as partnerships with local arts organizations will be an integral aspect of the facility's identity. One of the first collaborations to be announced is the May 2022 [Nashville Opera](#) performance of Richard Wagner's epic "Das Rheingold," which is anticipated to draw talent and audiences from around the country.

Nashville Opera Artistic Director John Hoopes said, "We are delighted to partner with Belmont University to bring a fully staged performance of Wagner's 'Das Rheingold' to the Belmont University Performing Arts Center during its inaugural season. The Center is an important addition to the cultural landscape of Music City, and we look forward to seeing it become a hub for community partnerships such as ours. Much care has been taken to create a performance hall with extraordinary acoustics, and I am thrilled to have selected an operatic masterwork that will show off the space to full advantage, while also drawing in a regional audience to experience all that this new venue has to offer."

Richard Wagner's "Das Rheingold" is the first of four operas comprising The Ring Cycle. Wagner's music is seared into the pop psyche as the soundtrack for the famous helicopter scene in *Apocalypse Now*, and that same power infuses "Das Rheingold" (The Gold of the Rhine River). Wagner's intense, extended one-act draws from Norse mythology and German folklore to weave a story of gods, giants and an epic heist of precious gold—for the forging of an all-powerful magic ring. Characters are represented by unique musical themes (leitmotifs), which are combined throughout the opera to bring the story to life.

While every performance in the new space will be a considerable draw, the building itself will prove its own attraction as acute attention to detail makes this project particularly impactful. Throughout the Performing Arts Center, visitors will find elaborate details and special touches that further enhance the beauty within and symbolize uniquely Belmont traits. A few highlights of the new performing arts center include:

- Variable acoustic system within the hall includes curtains placed in wall pockets that can be deployed to manage audio needs, or literally tune the room, for different events
- Three-story Grand Lobby designed to host banquets, galas and special events for up to 900 guests (when used in accompaniment with neighboring recital rooms)
- The side recital spaces can be individually cordoned off for separate acoustic or amplified smaller performances, or—since both areas feature floor space as large as the main stage—each can also be used as viable rehearsal spaces
- Flexible stage, lifts, rigging and lighting in the main hall provide maximum adaptability
- Top of the line theatrical equipment will give superior visual and acoustical experiences
- Innovative orchestra pit accompanied by two lifts allow the pit to be extended above, below or flush to the stage depending upon the production
- Ten-foot wide oculus lay-light medallion with ornate glasswork and intricate lighting details add a striking element to the performance hall dome
- Situated within the dome is ornate grillwork that allows for the room to acoustically breathe

Additional events for the hall's inaugural season, along with a fall dedication ceremony, will be announced at a future date. The full cast of "Das Rheingold," which will feature some of the finest operatic talent in the world, will be announced in June with the rest of Nashville Opera 2021.22 season.

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About Nashville Opera

Nashville Opera, Tennessee's largest professional opera company, creates artistic experiences that elevate our world. Among the most successful regional companies in the country, Nashville Opera has presented three different world premiere operas since its inception in 1981. Mainstage performances are presented at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center and the Noah Liff Opera Center, playing to over 10,000 people annually. Each year, Nashville Opera's extensive education and outreach touring program reaches approximately 25,000 students throughout Middle Tennessee. Visit nashvilleopera.org for more information.

About Belmont University

Belmont University—home of the October 22, 2020 Presidential Debate, the final in the election season—is made up of more than 8,200 students who come from every state and 28 countries. Nationally ranked and consistently recognized by U.S. News & World Report for its innovation and commitment to teaching, Belmont brings together the best of liberal arts and professional education in a Christian community of learning and service. The University's purpose is to help students explore their passions and develop their talents to meet the world's needs. With more than 100 areas of undergraduate study, 27 master's programs and five doctoral degrees, there is no limit to the ways Belmont University can expand an individual's horizon. For more information, visit www.belmont.edu.