

*Ellie Caulkins Opera House - Denver, Colorado*

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## Curtain Rises on Denver’s New Opera House

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Denver culture vultures, already attuned to first-rate theatrical venues at the Denver Performing Arts Complex, are agog over the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. This elegant new home to both Opera Colorado and the Colorado Ballet replaces the stodgy, outdated Auditorium Theater. Nearly a decade and half of planning, six months of demolition, one intense year of construction, and \$92 million went into creating a state-of-the-art theater within the shell of a 1908 landmark. When the petals of the art-glass chandelier fold in and the fixture makes its initial stately ascent toward the lofty ceiling, it will signal not only the start of a performance but also a thrilling era for music and dance in Denver.

The first requirement of the new house, says architect Christopher Wineman of SempleBrown Design, was “something acoustically wonderful. We didn’t try to reinvent the theatrical wheel. We use shapes and materials that work.”

The grandiose lobby – itself a symphony of muted, neutral colors, glass and soaring space – is a prelude to a breathtaking space. Cherry wood-walls and three balconies curve gracefully toward the stage, providing an unobstructed view from every one of the 2,280 seats. Those in the orchestra’s front row won’t have to crane their necks, and everyone from swank patrons in mezzanine boxes to budgeteers in the upper balcony’s last row will be able to see – and hear. On September 23, the heavy red curtain rises for Tchaikovsky’s *The Sleeping Beauty* to kick off the ballet season, and opera performances begin with Bizet’s *Carmen* on November 3. To combine gastronomy with the arts, visit Kevin Taylor at the Opera, a new restaurant serving before and after performances. -- *Claire Walter*

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