

Press release

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Designs revealed for the Annette Strauss Artist Square, Dallas

The Annette Strauss Artist Square will create a lively, welcoming public space in front of the Winspear Opera House, also designed by Foster + Partners. A key part of the wider masterplan for the area that will see the creation of a whole new Performing Arts District for Dallas, the new square will serve both as a venue for popular music, dance and events, as well as playing a vital role in bringing the world-class performances of the Dallas Symphony and Opera to a wider audience.

In keeping with the Winspears reinvention of the opera house for the twenty-first century, the new square is intended to attract a wide public of all ages and musical tastes and will help to ensure that the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts becomes a popular destination for the whole community, as well as the vehicle for the continued support and growth of all of the performing arts in the city.

Within the square, a performance lawn slopes towards a stage, with elevated side terraces providing excellent stage views and a platform for drinks and concession stands. Bordering the lawn, and sheltering the audience from the traffic noise of Woodall Rodgers freeway, is a new wall that replaces the old temporary fencing. The integrated lighting within the landscaped areas is a continuation of the site lighting design for the plaza and the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, and will unify and consolidate the different elements within the overall scheme.

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A state-of-the-art audio system directs sound to the audience in the performance lawn area, and a new stage enclosure provides enhanced lighting and scene staging opportunities, in addition to generous storage for equipment and seats.

Construction is progressing well on the Winspear Opera House, the focal point for the new district. Organisationally, the Winspear reinvents the opera house for a new century, creating a transparent, publicly welcoming series of spaces that wrap around the rich red-stained drum of the 2,200-seat auditorium. The ambition is to create a building that will not only be fully integrated with the cultural life of Dallas, but will become a destination in its own right for the non-opera going public, with a restaurant, café and bookstore that will be open throughout the day. Entered beneath a deeply overhanging canopy, which shades the outdoor spaces from the harsh Texan sun, the transition from the plaza, through the foyer, into the auditorium is designed to heighten the drama of attending a performance in effect, to take the theatre to the audience.

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