



**SEATTLE OPERA**  
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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**Kids and Opera:**  
**Seattle Opera's *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins***  
**Returns to Local Schools**

**Elementary School Students**  
**in Auburn, Bellevue, Des Moines, Seattle, and Yakima**  
**Perform with Seattle Opera Young Artists**

Seattle—Seattle Opera's 2008 Opera Goes to School program starts this week with performances of *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins* at St. Philomena's in Des Moines and Stevenson Elementary in Bellevue. These four-day workshops, based on an adaptation of Wagner's *Rheingold*, give elementary school children a hands-on experience in all aspects of opera, including acting, singing, theatrical movement, and orchestra. Each workshop culminates in a performance for the school which is attended by teachers, students, and their families.

This touring production's imaginative set consists of comic book-like panels based on the art of P. Craig Russell (adapted by Seattle Opera master scenic artist Kitty Kavanaugh). The bright contemporary costumes by Cynthia Savage (the giants wear hard hats and yellow slickers) give a modern spin to the age-old Norse myths retold in Wagner's opera. Education Artistic Administrator Jonathan Dean, who captions Seattle Opera's mainstage productions, wrote this hour-long English adaption of Wagner's *Rheingold*. This will be Vanessa Miller's fourth season directing the production.

*Theft of the Gold* features roles for approximately 60 children. The teaching artists of the company's *Opera Goes to School* program work with third, fourth, and fifth graders in a four-day workshop, teaching them how to perform in a real opera. Professional opera singers from the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program perform the lead roles of Wagner's gods and goddesses in *Theft of the Gold*, while the children play Nibelung dwarves and Nature spirits or perform accompaniment in the orchestra directed by professional teaching artists.

Seattle Opera Young Artists Leena Chopra, Emily Hindrichs, Elizabeth Pojanowski, Eugene Chan, Michael Anthony McGee, and Marcus Shelton will perform *Theft of the Gold* with the students at St. Philomena's in Des Moines (February 1), Lawton Elementary in Seattle (February 7 and 8), McGilvra Elementary in Seattle (February 14), and St. Benedict's in Seattle (February 22).

Megan Hart, Ani Maldjian, Margaret Gawrysiak, David Lara, Joshua Jeremiah, and Noah Baetge will perform *Theft of the Gold* with the students at Stevenson Elementary in Bellevue (February 1), St. Joseph's in Yakima (February 8), and Chinook Elementary in Auburn (February 15).

Producing more than 250 events and activities each year, Seattle Opera's Education Department is among the largest and most active of its type among arts organizations in the country. In the Education Department's Opera Goes to School program, professional

Teaching Artists, singers from the Young Artists Program, and Education Department staff work with grade-school students and teachers to introduce them to the art form.

*Opera Goes to School* is now in its seventh season. Previous projects include *Magic Flute: A Hero's Quest*, an adaptation of Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, which was later recorded (featuring the voices of Seattle Opera Young Artists) and released on CD by Starbucks.

For press and photographer access to these performances, please contact Hilda Cullen, Director of Public Relations, at 206.676.5543 or [hilda.cullen@seattleopera.org](mailto:hilda.cullen@seattleopera.org).

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#### **About Seattle Opera**

Founded in 1963, Seattle Opera is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. The company is recognized internationally for its theatrically compelling and musically accomplished performances, especially the Opera's interpretations of the works of Richard Wagner. Seattle Opera's Wagner tradition began under the leadership of the company's founding general director, Glynn Ross, and has continued since 1983 under General Director Speight Jenkins. Since 1975, Seattle Opera has presented 35 cycles of the *Ring* (three different productions), in addition to acclaimed productions of all the other major operas in the Wagner canon. Seattle Opera has achieved the highest per capita attendance of any major opera company in the United States, and draws opera-goers from four continents, nineteen countries, and forty-nine states.

*Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins* is made possible through the support of the ArtsFund, Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences, The Clowes Fund, Inc., The E.K. and Lillian F. Bishop Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Peach Foundation, PONCHO, and U.S. Bancorp Foundation. *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins* is dedicated to the memory of the late Gertrude E. Sprenger.