



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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SEATTLE OPERA CELEBRATES THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF GENERAL DIRECTOR SPEIGHT JENKINS IN 2008-09 SEASON

The Season Includes:

Second International Wagner Competition

Verdi's *Aida*

Strauss's *Elektra*

Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*

**Seattle Premiere of Robert Lepage's
Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Schoenberg's *Erwartung***

Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*

January 3, 2008...Speight Jenkins, General Director of Seattle Opera since 1983, celebrates his 25th anniversary season with the company in 2008-09. Under his guidance, the 45-year-old organization has become one of the leading opera companies in the U.S., recognized internationally for its theatrically compelling and musically accomplished performances. Its budget has grown in size and scope, the subscriber base has doubled, and its endowment has grown to \$19 million. Mr. Jenkins's acclaimed productions of all 10 of Richard Wagner's major works, including two productions of the *Ring*, have made Seattle Opera a mecca for Wagnerians worldwide and a catalyst for the arts and business community in Seattle itself.

In an effort to continually invigorate the artform, Mr. Jenkins, named by *Opera News* as one of “The 25 most powerful names in U.S. opera,” has made it his mission to promote undiscovered singers, directors, and conductors. In 1998 he established Seattle Opera’s Young Artists program, which has produced two Richard Tucker Award-winners in the last two consecutive years—Lawrence Brownlee and Brandon Jovanovich—and in 2006 he created Seattle Opera’s International Wagner Competition, which has provided a boost to the careers of not only the two 2006 winners—English baritone James Rutherford and Irish soprano Miriam Murphy—but also to several of the finalists. He’s advanced the careers of many vocal mainstays of the opera world, such as Stephanie Blythe, Andrea Gruber, Christine Goerke, Ben Heppner, and Jane Eaglen and engaged theater directors, such as Stephen Wadsworth and Bartlett Sher to direct operas. In 2006 he engaged Robert Spano to conduct his first *Ring* and recently named Asher Fisch as principal guest conductor of Seattle Opera.

“In almost 25 years of producing opera,” comments Mr. Jenkins, “my greatest satisfaction is the loyalty of the audience, my board, and the many artists who have done some of their best work here. I feel most blessed with all three and with a remarkable staff that manages to carry out the mission of Seattle Opera, as I see it, in an ideal manner.”

Mr. Jenkins’s 25th anniversary season reflects many of his accomplishments. On **August 16**, a group of eight young singers selected from international auditions will compete in Seattle Opera’s second **International Wagner Competition**. The competition will be preceded two days earlier on August 14 by a recital by Ben Heppner and Asher Fisch, both in Seattle for the competition—Mr. Heppner as a judge and Mr. Fisch to conduct.

That same month, Seattle Opera will present its first production of the season—**Verdi’s *Aida***—which opens **August 2**, the company’s first *Aida* in 16 years, and features the debut of Italian conductor Riccardo Frizza and stars Andrea Gruber in the title role. Ms. Gruber made her Seattle Opera debut in 1992 and has gone on to become a leading interpreter of Verdi’s heroines. *Aida* is set in Egypt at the time of the pharaohs, with sets by Tony-award winner Michael Yeargan (*The Light in the Piazza*), costumes by Peter J. Hall, stage direction by Met veteran Robin Guarino (*Julius Caesar*), and ballet by Seattle-based choreographer Donald Byrd. In the Opening Night cast, Italian tenor Antonello Palombi will sing the role of Radames, his debut role at La Scala last year. Also returning to Seattle Opera is American mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe as the Egyptian princess Amneris. American soprano Lisa Daltirus, Australian tenor Rosario La Spina, and American mezzo-soprano Luretta Bybee will sing *Aida*, Radames, and Amneris respectively on August 3, 8, 10, 15, and 22. (Ten subsequent performances will take place through August 23, 2008).

On **October 18**, Seattle Opera presents a remount of the company's production of **Richard Strauss's *Elektra***, which features the company debuts of conductor Lawrence Renes and in the title role, Janice Baird, who will also sing the role of Brünnhilde in Seattle Opera's 2009 *Ring*. Sophocles' ancient tragedy is pushed to the extreme in this elemental drama, which also features Irmgard Vilsmaier as Chrysothemis, Rosalind Plowright as Klytemnestra, and Richard Margison as Aegisthus. Jayne Casselman makes her company debut as Elektra, Carolyn Betty makes her debut as Chrysothemis, and Loretta Bybee sings Klytemnestra on October 19, 26, and 31. (Eight performances from October 18 through November 1, 2008).

Bizet's *Pearl Fishers*, opening **January 10**, features the Seattle Opera debuts of stage director Kay Walker Castaldo and sopranos Mary Dunleavy and Larissa Yudina as the exotic priestess Leïla, in a production that "sizzles with sensuality" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*). Tenors William Burden and John Osborn play the role of Nadir, Leïla's love interest, and baritones Christopher Feigum and David Adam Moore as Zurga, complete the triangle. Seattle Symphony's Gerard Schwarz conducts. (Eight performances from January 10 through 24, 2009.)

The Seattle Opera premiere of a double-bill of two one-act operas—**Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*** and **Schoenberg's *Erwartung (Expectation)***—opens **February 21**. This award-winning production was created by Canadian theater artist Robert Lepage, who designed Cirque du Soleil's *KÀ* and was recently selected to direct the Met's new *Ring* cycle. Polish mezzo-soprano Malgorzata Walewska makes her company debut as Judith, Bluebeard's overly curious wife, and John Relyea, Seattle Opera's 2004-05 Artist of the Year, performs the role of the brooding Duke Bluebeard. American soprano Susan Pierson stars in the one-woman opera *Erwartung*. Conductor Vjekoslav Sutej returns to Seattle Opera to conduct both scores. (Eight performances from February 21 through March 7, 2009)

The season concludes with nine performances from **May 2 to 16, 2009** of Peter Kazaras's new production of **Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro***. In their Seattle Opera debuts, Oren Gradus and Nicolas Cavallier will share the title roles; Mariusz Kwiecien, the 2006/07 Seattle Opera Artist of the Year for *Don Giovanni*, returns as Count Almaviva in the

Opening Night cast, joined by Twyla Robinson making her local debut as the Countess. Mr. Kazaras originally conceived this production of Mozart's beloved comedy for Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program. Refined and expanded for the Seattle Opera mainstage, this production reunites Kazaras with conductor Dean Williamson, who also conducted the Young Artists production in 2005.

For more information on individual artists, check Seattle Opera's Web site:

www.seattleopera.org.

Seattle Opera Ticket Information

Subscriptions renewals begin January 2, 2008

Subscriptions go on sale January 2, 2008

5-Opera Renewal Subscription Ticket Prices: \$185 to \$3,346*

5-Opera New Subscription Ticket Prices: \$197 to \$3,346*

Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 206.389.7676/ 800.426.1619

Online Orders: www.seattleopera.org

All performances take place at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., the matinees at 2:00 p.m.

*Prices include a \$2 per ticket facility fee and (in some locations) a preferred seating donation. This \$2 facility fee has been implemented in order to cover the capital costs of the opera house renovation that have not yet been funded.

For more information on individual productions and the artists, check Seattle Opera's Web site: www.seattleopera.org.

AIDA

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni
In Italian with English Captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

11 Performances: August 2, 3m, 6, 8, 9, 10m, 13, 15, 17m, 22, and 23, 2008

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours including one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m.; matinees begin at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Cairo, Opera House, December 24, 1871
Previous Seattle Opera Presentations: 1968, 1976, 1980, August 1992

Artists

Aida: Andrea Gruber/Lisa Daltirus*
Radames: Antonello Palombi/Rosario La Spina*
Amneris: Stephanie Blythe/Luretta Bybee*
Amonasro: Charles Taylor†/Richard Paul Fink*
Ramfis: Luiz-Ottavio Faria/Carsten Wittmoser†*
The King of Egypt: Joseph Rawley
High Priestess: Priti Gandhi
A Messenger: Karl Marx Reyes

Conductor: Riccardo Frizza†
Stage Director: Robin Guarino
Set Designer: Michael Yeargan
Costume Designer: Peter J. Hall
Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel
Choreographer: Donald E. Byrd
English Captions: Jonathan Dean

Sets: San Diego Opera
Costumes: Dallas Opera

* On August 3, 8, 10, 15, and 22, 2008 only
†Company Debut

Carsten Wittmoser was a finalist in the 2006 International Wagner Competition

Joseph Rawley is a former Seattle Opera Young Artist

ELEKTRA

Music by Richard Strauss
Libretto by Hugo von Hoffmanstahl
In German with English Captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

8 Performances: October 18, 19m, 22, 25, 26m, 29, 31, and November 1, 2008

Approximate Running Time: 1 hour, 40 minutes with no intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Dresden, Hofoper, January 1909

Previous Seattle Opera Productions: March 1984, March 1996

Artists

Elektra:	Janice Baird†/Jayne Casselman†*
Chrysothemis:	Irmgard Vilsmaier†/Carolyn Betty†*
Klytemnestra:	Rosalind Plowright†/Luretta Bybee*
Aegisthus:	Richard Margison
Orestes:	Alfred Walkert†
Young Servant:	Simeon Esper
Overseer:	Mary McLaughlin

Conductor:	Lawrence Renest†
Stage Director:	Chris Alexander
Set Designer:	Wolfram Skalicki
Lighting Designer:	Marcus Doshi†
English Captions:	Jonathan Dean

Scenery: Seattle Opera (originally created for Canadian Opera Company)

Costumes: Seattle Opera

*On October 19, 26, and 31, 2008 only

†Company Debut

Carolyn Betty was a finalist in the 2006 International Wagner Competition

THE PEARL FISHERS

Music by Georges Bizet
Libretto by Michel Carré and Eugène Cormon
In French with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

8 Performances: January 10, 11m, 14, 17, 18m, 21, 23, and 24, 2009

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 50 minutes including two intermissions
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Paris, Théâtre Lyrique, September 30, 1863
Previous Seattle Opera Presentations: April 1994

Artists

Leïla: Mary Dunleavy†/Larissa Yudina†*
Nadir: William Burden/John Osborn*
Zurga: Christopher Feigum/David Adam Moore*
Nourabad: Patrick Carfizzi

Conductor: Gerard Schwarz
Stage Director: Kay Walker Castaldo†
Set Designer: Boyd Ostroff†
Costume Designer: Richard St. Clair†
Lighting Designer: Neil Peter Jampolis
Choreographer: Peggy Hickey
English Captions: Jonathan Dean

Sets and Costumes: Philadelphia Opera

*On January 11, 18, and 23, 2009 only

† Company Debut

David Adam Moore is a former Seattle Opera Young Artist.

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

Music by Béla Bartók
Libretto by Béla Balász
In Hungarian with English Captions

ERWARTUNG

Music by Arnold Schoenberg
Libretto by Marie Pappenheim
In German with English Captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

8 Performances: February 21, 22m, 25, and 28, March 1m, 4, 6, and 7, 2009

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours including one intermission
Evening performances start at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Bluebeard's Castle

Premiere: Perrault; Budapest, Opera, May 24, 1918
Previous Seattle Opera Presentations: Seattle Opera Premiere

Erwartung

Premiere: Prague, Neues Deutsches Theater, June 6, 1924
Previous Seattle Opera Presentations: Seattle Opera Premiere

Artists

Bluebeard Cast:

Duke Bluebeard:	John Relyea
Judith:	Malgorzata Walewska†
Narrator:	Arthur Woodley

Erwartung Cast:

The Woman:	Susan Pierson
Conductor:	Vjekoslav Sutej
Production:	Robert Lepage†
Stage Director:	Françoise Racine†
Set and Costume Designer:	Michael Levine†
Lighting Designer:	Robert Thomson†
Media Effects Designer:	Laurie-Shawn Borzovoy†
Sets and costumes:	Canadian Opera Company

† Company Debut

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

(Le nozze di Figaro)

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

In Italian with English Captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

9 Performances: May 2, 3m, 6, 8, 9, 10m, 13, 15, and 16, 2009

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours and 15 minutes including one intermission

Evening performances start at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Vienna, Burg Theater, May 1, 1786

Previous Seattle Opera Productions: 1970, 1983, October 1989, October 1997

Artists

Figaro:	Oren Gradus†/Nicolas Cavallier†*
Count Almaviva:	Mariusz Kwiecien/Johannes Mannov†*
Countess Almaviva:	Twyla Robinson†/Jessica Jones*
Susanna:	Christine Brandes/Elizabeth Caballero†*
Cherubino:	Daniela Sindram†/Sarah Castle†*
Marcellina:	Joyce Castle
Dr. Bartolo:	Arthur Woodley
Don Basilio/Don Curzio:	Ted Schmitz†
Antonio:	Barry Johnson

Conductor:	Dean Williamson
Stage Director:	Peter Kazaras
Set Designer:	Curtis Wallin
Lighting Designer:	Connie Yun
English Captions:	Jonathan Dean

Sets and costumes: Seattle Opera

* On May 3, 8, 10, and 15, 2009 only

† Company Debut

Ted Schmitz is a former Seattle Opera Young Artist

For Press Only: Downloading Photos From Seattle Opera's Web Site

Go to the Images Library at http://www.seattleopera.org/news/image_library_photos.aspx.

In the Images Library, click on the **2008/09 Season**.

To use the photos in this section, click on the small square of image. When the larger image box opens, click on DOWNLOAD button. This will download a ZIP file (use Zipit, Unstuffit, or any compatible decompression program to open). The ZIP file will contain a high resolution JPEG (most are 4 x 6, 300 dpi) and a Word document with all photo credits and caption information.

Production photos will be updated throughout the season. If you need an image not available on this site, please contact Monte Jacobson, Seattle Opera Public Relations Coordinator, monte.jacobson@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. 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 and fifty states.