



SEATTLE OPERA  
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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## **Seattle Opera Launches Year Two of its Wallace Foundation Excellence Award Initiatives:**

### **“Community Connections Through Technology” for the World Premiere Production of *Amelia***

Seattle Opera partners with The Museum of Flight,  
Barnes & Noble, and Richard Hugo House

Seattle—As Seattle Opera is preparing to put the world premiere of its commissioned work, *Amelia*, onstage at McCaw Hall, the company is also working to make “community connections”—the focus of the second year of its Wallace Foundation Excellence Award.

The grant, which was awarded to Seattle Opera in 2008, spans four years, each with a distinct focus, and aims to use new technology to build new audiences. The first year of the grant focused on “Story-telling Through Technology,” and utilized the company’s production of Wagner’s *Ring* to form virtual communities outside of traditional performance venues, including its “Confessions of a First-Time Operagoer” video project and photo-sharing kiosks. The current year of the grant—second in the initiative—focuses on “Community Connections Through Technology.” Seattle Opera is collaborating with several local community groups and organizations to create events with integrated technology components surrounding the production of *Amelia*.

In the months leading up to the world premiere of *Amelia* on May 8, Seattle Opera will host several different **panel discussions**, all of which will be **streamed live for online viewing** at [www.livestream.com/seattleopera](http://www.livestream.com/seattleopera). On this website, people who are unable to attend the discussions in

person can still actively participate in the conversations—not only can the discussion be seen and heard live, but people can also submit questions to panelists in real time. After each event, the videos will also remain on the site, in a section called “Latest Videos,” for delayed viewing.

The first panel event—a forum for conversations about the Vietnam War from different perspectives—was held at The Museum of Flight on March 13. Seattle Opera board member and Vietnam War veteran Karl Ege moderated the discussion, which can be seen at [www.livestream.com/seattleopera](http://www.livestream.com/seattleopera). The second panel, which will feature three Vietnam War veterans, takes place on April 10 at 2:00 p.m. at The Museum of Flight and is free with museum admission. Visit [www.seattleopera.org/calendar](http://www.seattleopera.org/calendar) for information on the panelists.

Seattle Opera will also present a Monday night discussion series, called **Creating Amelia**, where members of *Amelia*’s creative team will share their experiences crafting a new American opera. These free discussions—all of which are moderated by General Director Speight Jenkins—will be held at the University Village Barnes & Noble, 2675 NE University Village Street, at 6:00 p.m. during the first three Mondays in April. On April 5, Jenkins is joined by stage director and story author Stephen Wadsworth to discuss *Staging Amelia*. On April 12, composer Daron Aric Hagen and librettist Gardner McFall will discuss *Composing Amelia*. The final lecture on April 19 will feature members of the design team, including set designer Thomas Lynch, who will discuss *Designing Amelia*.

During performances of *Amelia*, The Museum of Flight will install a temporary exhibit at McCaw Hall, exploring flight through historical photographs and Vietnam War memorabilia. Attendees will have the ability to take a guided cell phone tour through the exhibit. Similar to guided headset tours offered at museums, viewers can call a provided number on their mobile phones and access pre-recorded information about the items they are viewing.

Beginning March 15, weekly installments of ***The Making of Amelia*** video series will be released on Seattle Opera’s website. Each video has a unique focus—from working with a new score, to costume and set design research, to the rehearsal process—and will give audiences a glimpse of the many aspects that come together to facilitate an opera’s inaugural transition from the page to the stage.

Librettist Gardner McFall, who based the libretto on her book of poetry, *The Pilot’s Daughter*—elegies to her Navy-pilot father who was lost during the Vietnam War—will share her stories at several events. On April 26 at 7:00 p.m., McFall will give a lecture titled “Autobiographical Writing: From Life to Text,” at the Richard Hugo House, a center for local writers. At the University of Washington Bookstore, 4326 University Way NE, on May 10 at 7:00 p.m., McFall will read from and discuss her works. She will also

do a joint reading with poet Henri Cole at the Elliott Bay Bookstore, 1501 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, on May 7 at 5:30 p.m.

For more information about these projects or the world premiere of *Amelia*, visit [seattleopera.org/amelia](http://seattleopera.org/amelia).

The Wallace Foundation Excellence Awards are intended to build appreciation and demand for the arts. The Foundation takes a city-based approach, announcing two target cities each year to receive the awards. Seattle Opera was one of nine Seattle arts organizations to receive a Wallace Foundation Excellence Award last year, and its four-year \$750,000 grant is directed toward increasing accessibility to opera through new and innovative practices. During the third year of the grant, “Experiencing Place Through Technology,” Seattle Opera will debut a simulcast to introduce a wider cross-section of the public to the art of opera. Year four is focused on “Refining, Evaluating and Sharing Technology Applications,” wherein the company will analyze the success of the previous years’ activities through focus groups and surveys, with the ultimate goal of producing a product that can be shared with other arts organizations.

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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 38 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 operagoers from four continents and fifty states.