



SEATTLE OPERA NEWS  
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

**For Immediate Release**

## **SEATTLE OPERA'S ANNUAL MEETING**

### **Balancing Act Comes Down to the Wire**

**Steven C. Phelps President-Elect**

**Seattle Opera Sets Sales Record**

**Chris Alexander and Stephen Milling Artists of the Year**

**Opera Honors Virginia Anderson, City of Seattle**

SEATTLE—Tuesday, July 6, Seattle Opera's Board of Trustees held its 2003/04 Annual Meeting in Seattle Opera's new performance home—Marion Oliver McCaw Hall. The company does not yet have final figures for its 2003/04 budget of \$20.7 million. The books have remained open so the Opera can process contributions it has received over the holiday weekend. Administrative Director Kelly Tweeddale remains "cautiously optimistic" that the company will balance its budget. There is no question, however, that this has been the toughest season financially for Seattle Opera in more than a decade. (Seattle Opera has balanced its operating budget eleven consecutive years. The 2002/03 budget, for a shortened season, was \$14.3 million; the 2001/02 budget, for a *Ring* season, was \$22.7 million.)

Artistically, 2003/04 was a season of achievements. The season began with the opening of McCaw Hall and the realization that Seattle Opera now has for its performance home one of the finest facilities for opera anywhere in the world. With a more intimate theater, the transformed stage, pit, and backstage areas, a new trap, and the (fulfilled) promise of excellent acoustics, McCaw Hall provided General Director Speight Jenkins special opportunities for planning the 2003/04 season. Jenkins presented four new productions: Wagner's *Parsifal*, Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (world premiere of the final version), Bizet's *Carmen*, and Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The fifth opera, Puccini's *Fanciulla del West* (*Girl of the Golden West*), was presented in a production revised by Seattle Opera.

Among those making company debuts were Israeli conductor Asher Fisch (*Parsifal*), lighting designer Michael Chybowski (*Parsifal*), tenor Christopher Ventris as Parsifal, mezzo-soprano Linda Watson as Kundry, Intiman director Bart Sher (*MBE*), costume designer Elizabeth Caitlin Ward (*MBE*), set designer Alan Moyer (*Carmen*), soprano Monique McDonald as Ariadne, and Swiss conductor Oleg Caetani, tenor Antonello Palombi as Ramerrez and baritone Kim Josephson as the Sheriff (*Fanciulla*). Among those returning were the *Ring* II team of director François Rochaix and designer Robert Israel for the new *Parsifal*, director Chris Alexander and designer Robert A. Dahlstrom for *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Bernard Uzan for *Fanciulla*. Among the many outstanding performances by returning singers were bass Stephen Milling's Gurnemanz, bass-baritone Greer Grimsley's Amfortas, soprano Lauren Flanigan's Christine, mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe's Carmen, tenor Paul Charles Clarke's Don José, soprano Jane Eaglen's Ariadne, soprano Jane Giering-De Haan's Zerbinetta, and soprano Andrea Gruber's Minnie.

Chairman William P. Gerberding opened the meeting, welcoming all those who had come. He was followed by President John F. Nesholm, who sighted the milestones reached in 2003/04, among them Seattle Opera's inaugural season in Marion Oliver McCaw Hall and General Director Speight Jenkins' twentieth anniversary with the company.

## **BOARD MEETING**

### **Election of Trustees**

For the first time in its history, Seattle Opera's Board of Trustees has the office of President-Elect. The position was established to ensure continuity and a smooth transition between administrations. The current and longest-serving president, John F. Nesholm of LMN Architects, will have completed at the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year six consecutive two-year terms. Steven C. Phelps, of Badgley, Phelps and Bell, Inc., is the Board's President-Elect. Phelps, Board Vice President and Treasurer in 2003/04, also has served as Chair of the Development Committee, Chair of the Finance Committee, and a member of the Executive Committee. (For listings of officers and of new, returning, and retiring trustees, please see below.)

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

### **Financial Report (Steven C. Phelps)**

Overall, expenses stayed on track, though operational expenses in the new hall were greater than anticipated, as were the Opera's credit card fees. There were a number of shortages on the income side. Interest earnings, contribution totals for annual gifts under \$1,000, and ticket revenue (though several sales records were set) were all under budget. Entering the final quarter of the fiscal year, the Opera began an intense major gifts fundraising campaign to bridge the gap between income and expense.

### **Marketing Report (Tina Ryker)**

In 2003/04, its inaugural season in McCaw Hall, Seattle Opera returned to a full, five-opera production schedule and drew in more than 116,000 people—operagoers from all fifty states and at least nineteen countries—to see opera in the new facility. (In 2002/03, while performing in Mercer Arts Arena, the company had a reduced, 4-opera season and drew a paying audience of 78,033.) Mainstage ticket revenue in 2003/04 exceeded \$8 million, hitting an all-time high for a “non-*Ring*” season at Seattle Opera. That \$8 million in ticket revenue reflects an increase of more than 80% over ticket revenue for the 2002/03 season.

Seattle Opera had an all-time high of 49 mainstage performances (45 was the previous high). The 2003/04 season sold at 82% of capacity (the same as 02/03, but there were 17 more performances in 03/04).

The Opera had 33,466 single-ticket buyers in 2003/04, compared to 14,557 single-ticket buyers in 2002/03. Of the 33,466 single-ticket buyers, 55% were new to Seattle Opera. Seattle Opera sold an average of 682 single tickets per performance in 2003/04, an increase of 50% over the 454 average per performance in the 2002/03 season. The subscription base increased 10% over the previous season's: from 16,311 to 18,006. 7% of subscribers were new to the Opera.

Seattle Opera's performance of *Carmen* had 13 performances, the most for any opera in the company's history, and each of those performances sold out, making *Carmen* the most well attended season opera in Seattle Opera's history.

### **Development Report (James Faulstich, Vice President)**

James Faulstich asked and then answered the question “How many donors does it take to support an opera company?” And though the books are not yet closed, and not all donations are in, Faulstich reported that in 2003/04, it took 8,838 individual donors and 48 foundations, corporations, and arts funds, plus federal, state, county, and city arts commissions. The Development Department estimates that it raised 28.9% more for 2003/04 than for the 2002/03 season.

### **Education Report (Perry Lorenzo)**

The 2003/04 Young Artists Program included ten recitals and six concerts in diverse locations around the Pacific Northwest and six performances of a fully staged opera, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, at Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue. The Young Artists continued to be a vital part of the elementary school education program (*Opera Goes to School*) through *The Magic Flute: A Hero's Quest*, an adaptation of Mozart's opera for—and featuring the participation of—children. Two of Seattle Opera's Young Artists, soprano Maria D'Amato and baritone Michael Todd Simpson, were given the honor of singing the National Anthem at the Mariners' opening game (they were also interviewed about singing the anthem for TV news.)

Seattle Opera continued its adult education offerings with free public lectures, *Overtures to the Opera*,

*Aspects of the Opera*, *Opera Unabridged* seminars, Jenkins' after-the-performance Q&A, and other education events. Seattle Opera's radio previews and live broadcasts reached an estimated 127,500.

### **Bravo! Club Report (Dominik Musafia, Trustee)**

The BRAVO! Club—an opera membership club for people between the ages of 21 and 39—increased its membership by 60% during the 2003/04 season, growing from 300 to more than 475 members. 80% of BRAVO! members subscribe to Seattle Opera, helping to fulfill the club's mission of creating future audiences for Seattle Opera. During *Carmen*, BRAVO members and their guests made up 17% of the audience for the G series performance! The Club had ten events this season, ranging from Young Artists recitals to Speight Jenkins' lectures to social parties.

### **Seattle Opera Guild Report (N. Donn Talenti, Trustee, 2003/04 Guild President)**

Seattle Opera Guild joined in partnership with Seattle Opera to assist in procuring items for the PONCHO auction. The Guild also joined in partnership with Seattle Opera and KING FM for the "*OperaMania*" student competition and broadcasts. The Guild continued its student ticket subsidy program, purchasing 150 subscriptions for students. The Guild contributed \$50,000 to the Opera in 2003/04. The president of the Seattle Opera Guild for 2004/05 is Mildred Jesse.

### **"WAM"**

#### **Wagner and More (Tom Allen, Vice President)**

Tom Allen noted that "We're sitting on Bayreuth West yet have no Wagner Society here." Consequently, he and several others active at Seattle Opera decided to establish a new club: "Wagner and More," for short "WAM." Similar to Wagner societies, this club will focus on educational and social activities. It will, however, extend beyond the works of Richard Wagner. Allen is particularly interested in providing "hosts" to entertain the many opera tourists who come to town and to make them feel at home here at Seattle Opera. More details will be announced in the months ahead.

### **Seattle Opera Foundation Report (Jeffrey Hanna, Vice President)**

Jeffrey Hanna announced that the Foundation is just \$8,370 away from reaching its \$2,000,000 goal for completing its one-to-one matching challenge grant from the Kreielsheimer Foundation. The deadline for the match is the end of the calendar year.

### **Recognition of Virginia Anderson and the City of Seattle**

Seattle Opera honored the City of Seattle—the Mayor's Office, represented by Tim Ceis, and the City Council, represented by Jean Godden—and Virginia Anderson, director of Seattle Center (unable to attend), for their role in the McCaw Hall project. The project included \$38 million in city funding (\$9 million in Councilmanic Bonds) and created an innovative model for the day-to-day running of the hall. That model provides Seattle Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet with active roles in making management decisions with Seattle Center about the hall.

## **Artists of the Year**

Jenkins announced the winners of Seattle Opera's Artists of the Year awards: Chris Alexander, director of Seattle Opera's new production of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and bass Stephen Milling, Gurnemanz in Seattle Opera's new production of Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*. (Biographical information on Alexander and Milling is available on Seattle Opera's Web site: [www.seattleopera.org](http://www.seattleopera.org).)

The Artist of the Year award is meant to honor the individual singer, conductor, director, or designer who has made the most significant contribution to the success of the season. This is the first time that Seattle Opera has had two artists of the year. Most years, the award has gone to a singer.

"Considering how important conductors, directors, and designers are to the company," says Jenkins, "I thought it would be a good idea for us to split the ballot." Now people can vote for a singer and for a conductor, director, or designer.

Participating in the selection process of Seattle Opera's Artists of the Year are members of Seattle Opera's Board of Trustees, Producers' Club, and staff, as well as selected members of the local press. This is the company's fourteenth annual selection of Artist of the Year. The voting was tabulated by Clark Nuber P.S. Previous winners include (in chronological order, starting with the 1990/91 season): stage director Francesca Zambello, soprano Sally Wolf, baritone Robert Orth, soprano Jane Eaglen, soprano Harolyn Blackwell, tenor Ben Heppner, countertenor Brian Asawa, soprano Sheri Greenawald, soprano Jane Eaglen, bass Alexander Anisimov, baritone Christopher Maltman, director Stephen Wadsworth, and contralto Ewa Podles.

## **SEATTLE OPERA 2004/05 BOARD OF TRUSTEES OFFICERS**

**Chairman:** William P. Gerberding

**President:** John F. Nesholm

**President-Elect:** Steven C. Phelps

**Executive Vice President:** Gerard L. Hanauer

**Treasurer:** Jeffrey Hanna

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**Vice Presidents:** Thomas H. Allen, Steven A. Clifford, Tracy Edgers, James R. Faulstich, Diana Gale, Max E. Gellert, Jerry Landeen, James David Raisbeck, Dana A. Rasmussen, Kenneth L. Schubert, Jr., Jeffrey T. Seely, A. McNair Smith, M.D., John Elvidge Veblen

## **RETIRING, RE-ELECTED, AND NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

Retiring Board Members: Jennifer Emerson, George S. Schuchart, Jr., N. Donn Talenti

New Board Members: Gregory Chan, M.D., Mildred Jesse, JJ McKay, Edward L. Miles, Linda Nordstrom (completing the late Christian M. Seifert's term), Jane Remsburg

Re-Elected Board Members: Janice C. Condit, Andrea K. Grosso, Gerard L. Hanauer, Jim L. Hodge, Susanne F. Hubbach, Jerry Landeen, Philip P. Mann, J. Thurston Roach, Kenneth L. Schubert, Jr., A. McNair Smith, M.D., Stephen A. Sprenger, Patricia Tall-Takacs, John Elvidge Veblen

## CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

Lawrence W. Clarkson

## HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Beverly Brazeau, Donald L. Johnson, Michael M. Scott, Gertrude E. Sprenger

## ADVISORY BOARD

Claire Bloom, John M. Bloxom, Jr., Vinson Cole, Norma B. Croco, Jane Davis, Mildred K. Dunn, Marion O. Garrison, Laura Ingham, Victoria Ivarsson, Ralph Kaminsky, Duff Kennedy, Wah Lui, Betty McCurdy, Terrence McNally, Marianna B. Price, Sam Rubinstein, Judy Schuchart, Kayla Skinner, Margaret Taylor, Kate Van Ness, Virginia Wright

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Seattle Opera dedicated its inaugural season in Marion Oliver McCaw Hall to Priscilla "Patsy" Bullitt Collins.

Founded in 1963, Seattle Opera has developed into 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. (TR) 7/7/4