



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

NEWS

SEATTLE OPERA'S ANNUAL MEETING

Opera Projects Budget Shortfall

2006 *Rosenkavalier* Dedicated to Outgoing President, John Nesholm

Steven C. Phelps New Board President

William P. Gerberding New Nominations Chair

Relyea and Alexander Artists of the Year

SEATTLE—On Tuesday, July 12, Seattle Opera announced at its Annual Meeting, at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, that the company is projecting a budget shortfall of \$250,000 to \$280,000 for the 2004/05 season.

Although the Opera ends 2003/04 with a budget shortfall, artistically the company has had another outstanding season with the return of Wagner's *Lohengrin*; a new production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, set in Mussolini's Italy; Vaness in her first Puccini *Manon*; an encore presentation of Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas*; and a new production of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann*. Board President John F. Nesholm, a partner at LMN Architects, emphasized that "we are committed to maintaining and supporting this extraordinary quality of opera."

Election of Trustees

Stepping down from the Presidency to assume the position of Chairman of the Board, Nesholm is the longest-serving president in Seattle Opera's history, having completed six consecutive two-year terms. Commending Nesholm for his unprecedented service, Chairman William P. Gerberding noted that "As President, John has lent credibility to the Board because of his reputation and stature and his sound leadership in policy matters ranging from budgeting to real estate to major personnel matters." The outgoing Chairman called attention to the fact that both the Nesholms, John and his wife Laurel (who preceded John on the Opera's Board), "have been indispensable to Seattle Opera demonstrating a passion for opera and providing enormous financial support through personal gifts and the Nesholm Family Foundation."

To honor John Nesholm and Laurel for their years of service, Seattle Opera is dedicating its 2006 summer production of Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* to the couple. Back in 1969, the couple had their first opera date at a Seattle Opera performance of *Der Rosenkavalier* with soprano Régine Crespin as the Marschallin. The Board announced that it would be hosting a dinner in the Nesholms' honor during the run of *Der Rosenkavalier*. (Details about the 2006 production will be released at a later date.)

Succeeding Nesholm as President is Steven C. Phelps, of Badgley, Phelps and Bell, Inc. Phelps, President-Elect in 2004/05, has served as a Vice President, Chair of the Development Committee, Chair of the Finance Committee, and member of the Executive Committee. (For listings of officers and of new, returning, and retiring trustees, please see below.) In discussing Seattle Opera's artistic status, the new president stated: "This may come as a surprise to many of us native Seattleites who have long grown accustomed to the idea that we are some sort of cultural outpost ... but the scuttlebutt in San Francisco and elsewhere is that some of the most creative and brilliant work in American opera today is happening right here in Seattle, in this hall."

Gerberding will remain with the Opera and hold the honorary title of Chairman Emeritus and Chair of Nominations for the Board. General Director Speight Jenkins announced that to honor Gerberding for his service as Chairman of the Board—and the tremendous impact he had on the building and funding of McCaw Hall—that Box A in the new hall will be named in his honor. Expressing his gratitude for Gerberding's service, Jenkins stated: "No one has more standing in our community than Bill Gerberding. His success as President of the University of Washington remains fresh in the public's mind, and he has brought great prestige to Seattle Opera by serving as our Chairman."

Financial Report (Jeff Hanna)
(financials unaudited at this date)

Jeff Hanna reported that the Opera anticipates a budget shortfall of \$250,000 to \$280,000.

Operational expenses for 2004/5 are approximately \$18.5 million (the original budget was \$19.5 million), and contributions, at \$10.5 million, are as budgeted. Ticket revenue, however, at \$6.9 million, is \$1.25 million under budget.

While Hanna cited the difficult economic environment as one factor, he said it is also true that the Opera, anticipating the momentum for the opening of McCaw Hall to carry over into the second season in the hall and translate into a comparable number of sales, was overly enthusiastic in its budget projections (prepared years in advance).

Identifying the problem early on, the Opera staff was able to cut expenses by \$1 million. This reduction in expenses resulted in part from cutting a performance and freezing staff wages. This was a major accomplishment even though “we could not quite close the gap: a gap that amounts to only 1.5% of our expenses.”

Despite the annual operating fund shortfall, the Opera does not have a cash-flow problem.

The budget for 2005/06 is \$25 million, which includes \$7.8 million for the *Ring*, and Hanna reminded everyone that “We’re starting off 2005/06 with a sold-out *Ring*.” (The *Ring* sold out in November 2004. Seattle Opera does have a waiting list for those still wanting to purchase tickets and will make standing room tickets available once the *Ring* opens on the first day of each cycle).

The Seattle Opera Foundation (Endowment Fund), Hanna reported, was at \$5.96 million through March 2005.

Administrative Director’s Report (Kelly Tweeddale)

Kelly Tweeddale informed trustees that the Sarah Sze sculpture, built by Seattle Opera Scenic Studios (team led by John Humphrey and George Howard), is now being installed in McCaw Hall. There will be a reception 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday, July 25, 2005, in the lobby of McCaw Hall, for the public to come by and view the work.

Tweeddale included in her remarks highlights of the Opera’s education activities in 2004/05.

The 2004/05 Young Artists Program included numerous recitals and concerts throughout the Pacific Northwest and six performances of a fully staged opera, Mozart’s *Nozze di Figaro*, at Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue. The sold-out *Figaro* performances set a sales record for the Young Artists Program. The Young Artists continued to be a vital part of the elementary school education program (*Opera Goes to School*) through their participation in *Experience Opera*.

During 2004/05, the Education Department began “workshopping” a new work: *Theft of the Gold*, Jonathan Dean’s adaptation of Wagner’s *Rheingold* for elementary school children. Major roles are played by members of Seattle Opera’s Young Artists Program, and children from the individual schools participate by preparing sets, performing in the orchestra, or appearing in the show, which is performed at their schools.

Seattle Opera continued its adult education offerings with free public lectures, *Overtures to the Opera*, *Aspects of the Opera*, and *Opera Unabridged*.

Reports by Seattle Opera Support Groups

Bravo! Club (Alex J. Rose, Trustee)

The BRAVO! Club—an opera membership club for people between the ages of 21 and 39—increased its membership by 13% during the 2004/05 season, growing from 450 to more than 511 members. Eighty percent of BRAVO! members subscribe to Seattle Opera, helping to fulfill the club’s mission of creating future audiences for Seattle Opera. The Club had eight major events this season, ranging from Young Artists recitals to Speight Jenkins’ lectures to social events at venues such as the Columbia Tower Club, the Triple Door, and the Woodmark Hotel.

“WAM”

Wagner and More (Thomas H. Allen, Vice President)

The new club WAM, “Wagner and More,” plans “events and activities for the social Wagnerians,” reported Opera trustee Thomas H. Allen. The club, started just a year ago, now has 90 members and is looking forward to a busy summer with three cycles of Wagner’s *Ring* and tourists coming to town from around the U.S. and abroad for the performances and a host of other festival activities.

Seattle Opera Guild (2004/05 Guild President, Mildred Jesse)

2004/05 Guild President Mildred Jesse reported on the Seattle Opera Guild’s activities and contributions, among them a gift of \$57,000 to Seattle Opera. Jesse commended Guild members for helping with the staffing of the new shop run by Seattle Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet, Amusements. Jesse also introduced the Guild’s 2005/06 President, Robert Milnor.

Artists of the Year

Jenkins announced the winners of Seattle Opera’s Artists of the Year awards: Bass-baritone John Relyea who played the four villains in the new production of Offenbach’s *Contes d’Hoffmann* and director Chris Alexander, who directed that production. Alexander is the first back-to-back winner of the Opera’s Artist of the Year award, having won last season for directing Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

(Biographical information on Relyea and Alexander is available on Seattle Opera’s Web site: 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. At the conclusion of the 2003/04 season, Seattle Opera began honoring two Artists of the Year: one a conductor, director, or designer; the other a singer.

Participating in the selection process of Seattle Opera's Artists of the Year are members of Seattle Opera's Board of Trustees, Diamond Level and Platinum Circle donors, and staff, as well as selected members of the local press. This is the company's fifteenth 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, contralto Ewa Podles, and last season, bass Stephen Milling and director Christopher Alexander.

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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: 7/13/05)