



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE: October 8, 2008

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**Sparks Fly in Seattle Opera's Riveting Production of
Richard Strauss's *Elektra*
October 18 through November 1**

**American Soprano Janice Baird
Makes her West Coast Debut**

Seattle—Seattle Opera's fall production of Richard Strauss's riveting drama *Elektra* opens at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall on October 18 and runs through November 1, 2008. Based on Sophocles' ancient tragedy, the opera focuses on Agamemnon's daughter Elektra and her manic obsession with avenging his murder. *Elektra* features some of Strauss's most voluptuous music—the magnificent score, an enormous stream of orchestral sound, ranges from lush melodies to unearthly effects.

American soprano Janice Baird makes her West Coast debut as Elektra—a tour-de-force role for the soprano. Baird, who has sung Wagner and Strauss roles across Europe, will return to Seattle in August 2009 as the company's new Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*. Most recently seen as Isolde at the Metropolitan Opera, she frequently appears as Richard Strauss's Salome, Elektra, and the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and in such Wagner roles as Ortrud in *Lohengrin* and Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer*.

Maestro Lawrence Renes also makes his Seattle Opera debut with *Elektra*. This dynamic young conductor has lent his baton to the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, and the Minnesota, Seattle, Houston, Detroit, and St. Louis Symphonies. In 2007 he conducted the European premiere of John Adams' *Dr. Atomic* at Netherlands Opera, and will conduct its U.K. premiere in 2009 at English National Opera. Last year he conducted the U.S. premiere of Tan Dun's *Tea* with Santa Fe Opera. Two-time Artist of the Year recipient Chris Alexander returns to Seattle to direct *Elektra*, with new costumes designed by Melanie Taylor Burgess. Sets (previously seen in 1996) were designed by the late Wolfram Skalicki, and lighting design will be done by Marcus Doshi in his Seattle Opera debut.

Making their Seattle debuts are German soprano Irmgard Vilsmaier as Elektra's sister Chrysothemis, and British mezzo-soprano Rosalind Plowright as their mother Klytämnestra. Canadian tenor Richard Margison returns to Seattle Opera as Aegisth. American bass-baritone Alfred Walker makes his Seattle Opera debut as Orest, a role he recently sang for his La Scala debut.

The alternate cast features the Seattle Opera debuts of American sopranos Jayne Casselman as Elektra, and Carolyn Betty as Chrysothemis. Casselman's recent Strauss roles include Elektra, Ariadne, and Salome, and she has appeared as Wagner heroines Brünnhilde, Isolde, and Kundry in *Parsifal*. Also performing on October 19, 26, and 31 are American mezzo-soprano Luretta Bybee as Klytämnestra and American tenor Thomas Harper as Aegisth.

Single tickets for *Elektra* start at \$25, and are available through Seattle Opera's website, by calling 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619, or by mobile phone at mobile.seattleopera.org.

To view video clips and photographs from Seattle Opera's 1996 production of *Elektra*, read an interview with Janice Baird, or get unique insights into the opera from General Director Speight Jenkins and Director Chris Alexander, visit www.seattleopera.org.

Please note the following artists list for Elektra replaces all previously published or announced cast lists. Further information about the 2008/09 season can be found at seattleopera.org.

ELEKTRA

Music by Richard Strauss
Libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal
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†*
Klytämnestra:	Rosalind Plowright†/Luretta Bybee*
Aegisth:	Richard Margison/Thomas Harper
Orest:	Alfred Walker†
Guardian of Orest:	Byron Ellis
Young Servant:	Simeon Esper
Old Servant:	Peter Lindskoog†
Overseer:	Mary McLaughlin
First Maid:	Cynthia Jansen
Second Maid:	Sarah Mattox
Third Maid:	Melissa Parks
Fourth Maid:	Emily Clubb
Fifth Maid:	Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox
Trainbearer:	Dana Johnson
Confidante:	Kimberly Giordano

Conductor:	Lawrence Renes†
Stage Director:	Chris Alexander
Set Designer:	Wolfram Skalicki
Costume Designer:	Melanie Taylor Burgess†
Lighting Designer:	Marcus Doshi†
English Captions:	Jonathan Dean

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

†Company Debut

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

^Janice Baird will perform on October 18, 22, 25, 29, and 31. Jayne Casselman will perform on October 19, 26, and November 1.

Janice Baird's performances are made possible by generous financial support from the James and Sherry Raisbeck Lead Singers' Fund.

Microsoft Corporation and The Boeing Company are Seattle Opera's 2008/09 Season Sponsors.

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About Seattle Opera

SEATTLE OPERA'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES DEDICATES THE 2008/09 SEASON TO SPEIGHT JENKINS IN CELEBRATION OF HIS 25TH ANNIVERSARY AS GENERAL DIRECTOR.

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 operagoers from four continents, nineteen countries, and forty-nine states.