



SEATTLE OPERA NEWS  
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

For Release Friday, December 10, 2004

## ***Florencia en el Amazonas* Returns to Seattle Opera, New Production of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann* Planned, Single Tickets Go On Sale Monday, December 13**

Seattle—Single tickets for Seattle Opera's last two productions of the season, *Florencia en el Amazonas* and *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, go on sale Monday, December 13, 2004. *Florencia en el Amazonas* opens February 26 and *Les contes d'Hoffmann* opens May 7.

Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* was performed at Seattle Opera in March 1998. The opera was originally commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and Seattle Opera. Since its world premiere in 1996, the opera's lush music and fantastical Spanish-language libretto, heavily influenced by the works of Gabriel García Márquez, have been noted by critics throughout the United States and Latin America. "No production has been requested so many times of me as Catán's *Florencia in the Amazonas*," said Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins. "It opened here to a moderately good box office and, once word spread, promptly sold out every seat. *Florencia* has been wildly successful in every American city where it has played, including a repeat in Houston, but I think it has a special core of fans here in Seattle."

Sopranos Nancy Gustafson and Wendy Hill alternate in the role of the opera diva, Florencia Grimaldi, in *Florencia en el Amazonas*. Gustafson made her Seattle Opera debut in 1987 as Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* and returned to the company to sing Antonia in the 1990 production of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann*. Hill made her Seattle Opera debut as Romilda in Handel's *Xerxes* in 1997 and returned to sing the First Lady in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, Rosalinde in Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Fledermaus*, and, most recently, a Flower Maiden in Wagner's *Parsifal*.

The rest of the cast will sing for all performances of *Florencia en el Amazonas*. American lyric baritone Nathan Gunn and American soprano Luretta Bybee return here to sing Ríolobo and Paula. Gunn last appeared at Seattle Opera as Papageno in Mozart's *Zauberflöte* in 1999. Luretta Bybee sang Carmen here in 2004 as well as appearing in Wagner's *Parsifal* and Puccini's *Fanciulla del West* last season. Former Seattle Opera Young Artist Lawrence Brownlee, last seen here as Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* in 2003, returns to Seattle Opera in the tenor role of Arcadio. Irish soprano Frances Lucey, English bass-baritone D'Arcy Bleiker, and Brazilian bass Luiz-Ottavio Faria make their Seattle Opera debuts as Rosalba, Álvaro, and the Captain. The production features sets designed by Robert Israel and built by Seattle Opera, and costumes designed by Catherine Zuber. Vjekoslav Sutej conducts.

*Florencia en el Amazonas* opens February 26 and runs through March 12 for nine performances.

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In May, Seattle Opera concludes the season with a new production of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann* directed by Chris Alexander, who received Seattle Opera's Artist of the Year Award for his direction of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* last season. Based upon the fairy tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann, the new production features costumes by German designer Marie-Theresa Cramer in her Seattle Opera debut and sets by local designer Robert A. Dahlstrom, who designed Seattle Opera's popular *Rigoletto* sets.

Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann* marks the return of several popular Seattle Opera singers in both casts. American tenor Vinson Cole, who lives in Seattle, sings the title role in the Opening Night cast. Since his Seattle Opera debut as Orphée in the 1988 production of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*, Cole has returned to Seattle Opera to sing Nadir in Bizet's *Pêcheurs de perles*, the title role in Verdi's *Don Carlos*, Roméo in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, Don José in Bizet's *Carmen*, the title role in Massenet's *Werther*, the title role in Gounod's *Faust*, Gérald in Delibe's *Lakmé*, and Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca*. Cole was last seen here as Gustavus III in Verdi's *Ballo in maschera*.

Hoffmann's ladies in the Opening Night cast will be sung by Harolyn Blackwell (last here as Norina in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*) as the doll Olympia and Marie Plette (Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin* last summer) as the tragically ill Antonia and the sophisticated Stella. Mezzo-soprano Helene Schneiderman, who made her Seattle Opera debut as Olga in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, will sing Nicklausse and the Muse. Bass-baritone John Relyea will sing all four of the villains in the Opening Night cast. Relyea last appeared at Seattle Opera as Don Basilio in Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

The Sunday/Friday cast features American tenor John Uhlenhopp as Hoffmann. Uhlenhopp made his Seattle Opera debut in the 1994 production of Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen* as the Schoolmaster. Former Seattle Opera Young Artists Heather Parker and Julianne Gearhart will sing Stella/Antonia and Olympia respectively. Parker was last seen at Seattle Opera as Mercédès in the 2004 production of Bizet's *Carmen*. Gearhart made her Seattle Opera mainstage debut as Helen Niles in Marvin David Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra* and returned later in the season as Zerbinetta in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Linda Pavelka, a Flower Maiden and Esquire in Wagner's *Parsifal*, will sing Nicklausse/Muse roles in the Sunday/Friday cast. American bass-baritone Dean Elzinga will make his Seattle Opera debut as the four villains in the Sunday/Friday performances.

Also appearing in all performances of *Les contes d'Hoffmann* are mezzo-soprano Nancy Fabiola Herrera as the courtesan Giulietta in her Seattle Opera debut, bass Arthur Woodley (Ashby in last season's *Fanciulla del West*) as Crespel, baritone Scott Hogsed (Dancaire in the 2004 production of *Carmen*) as Schlemil, and tenor Doug Jones (Borsa in *Rigoletto*) as Andrès, Pitichinaccio, Frantz, and Cochenille. European mezzo-soprano Ann-Katrin Naidu makes her Seattle Opera debut as Antonia's mother. Former Seattle Opera Young Artists Michael Todd Simpson and Leodigario del Rosario also make their Seattle Opera debuts in these performances singing the students Hermann and Nathanaël.

Conductor Dean Williamson began his career in Seattle, where he was principal coach and pianist for Seattle Opera for twelve years. He helped launch the company's Young Artists Program in 1997 and served as music director for the program for five years. Since then, Williamson has continued to conduct all of Seattle Opera's Young Artists performances in Bellevue as well as performances for Boston Lyric Opera, Minnesota Opera, and Wolftrap Opera, among others. He makes his Seattle Opera mainstage debut conducting *Les contes d'Hoffmann* in May.

Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann* opens May 7 and runs through May 22 for nine performances.

***Florencia en el Amazonas and Les contes d'Hoffmann***

**Ticket Information**

Ticket Prices: \$40 - \$129 (Student and senior discounts available day of performance)

Ticket Office: 206-389-7676/ 800-426-1619

Credit Cards Accepted: American Express, VISA, MasterCard

Online Orders: [www.seattleopera.org](http://www.seattleopera.org)

*Florencia en el Amazonas*

Music by Daniel Catán

Libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain

In Spanish with English captions

Nine Performances: February 26, 27, March 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 2005

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours including 1 intermission

All performances at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m.

February 27 and March 6 matinees begin at 2:00 p.m.

*Les contes d'Hoffmann*

Music by Jacques Offenbach

Libretto by Jules Barbier

In French with English captions

Nine Performances: May 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, and 22, 2005

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours with 2 intermissions

All performances in Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m.

May 8 and May 22 matinees begin at 2:00 p.m.

***Florencia en el Amazonas***

**Artists List**

Florencia Grimaldi: Nancy Gustafson/Wendy Hill\*

Ríolobo: Nathan Gunn

Rosalba: Frances Lucey†

Arcadio: Lawrence Brownlee

Paula: Luretta Bybee

Alvaro: D'Arcy Bleiker†

Captain: Luiz Ottavio Faria†

Conductor: Vjekoslav Sutej

Production: Francesca Zambello

Director: Andrew Morton

Set Designer: Robert Israel

Costume Designer: Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer: Paul Pyant

Choreographer: Danny Pelzig

Scenery: Seattle Opera

Costumes: Houston Grand Opera

†Seattle Opera Debut \*On February 27, March 4, and March 6, 2005 only

***Les contes d'Hoffmann***

**Artists List**

Hoffmann: Vinson Cole/John Uhlenhopp\*  
Lindorf/Coppélius/Dapertutto/Dr. Miracle: John Relyea/Dean Elzinga\*†  
Stella/Antonia: Marie Plette/Heather Parker  
Olympia: Harolyn Blackwell/Julianne Gearhart  
Giulietta: Nancy Fabiola Herrera†  
Crespel: Arthur Woodley  
Schlemil: Scott Hogsed  
Andrès/Pitichinaccio/Frantz/Cochénille: Doug Jones  
Spalanzani: Steven Cole  
Nicklausse/Muse: Helene Schneiderman/Linda Pavelka  
Antonia's Mother: Anne-Katrin Naidu†  
Nathanaël: Leodigario del Rosario†  
Hermann: Michael Todd Simpson†  
Conductor: Dean Williamson  
Director: Chris Alexander  
Set Designer: Robert A. Dahlstrom  
Costume Designer: Marie-Theresa Cramer†  
Choreographer: Karen Kellet

†Seattle Opera debut \*On May 8, 13, 20, and 22, 2005 only

**More Information on Seattle Opera's Web Site**

Complete cast lists, music clips, and further information on *Florenzia en el Amazonas* and *Les contes d'Hoffmann* can be found at [www.seattleopera.org](http://www.seattleopera.org). Past press releases are posted at [www.seattleopera.org/news/](http://www.seattleopera.org/news/).

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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.*

*Seattle Opera is grateful to the following organizations for their steadfast major institutional support: ArtsFund, Bank of America, The Boeing Company, Classical KING FM 98.1, Charles E. Stuart Charitable Foundation, The James and Sherry Raisbeck Singers' Endowment, 4Culture, Kreielsheimer Foundation, Wallace Foundation, Microsoft Corporation, National Endowment for the Arts, Nesholm Family Foundation, PONCHO, City Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, Seattle Opera Guild, Sherman Clay Pianos, and Washington State Arts Commission. Seattle Opera is a participant in the Seattle Arts Stabilization Project, a joint venture of the Seattle Arts Stabilization Committee and the National Arts Stabilization Fund.*

*Florenzia en el Amazonas is sponsored by Artsfund. Les contes d'Hoffmann is sponsored by the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs.*