



FOR RELEASE: April 4, 2007

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Seattle Opera Gala *Fête in the Forest*

Is a Sell-out!

Annual Gala Raises \$100,000

for Seattle Opera's Education and Outreach Programs

Seattle—Seattle Opera's annual gala took place on March 31, 2007. Tickets to the sold-out event, themed *Fête in the Forest*, included a reception and an exclusive performance of the Verdi opera *Falstaff*, followed by an elegant dinner and dance at the Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue, Washington. This was the first time that Seattle Opera's gala took place in Bellevue and included a fully staged opera. The event raised more than \$100,000 for Seattle Opera's education and outreach programs.

"The party was a huge success, as was the performance," said General Director Spright Jenkins. "Because of the hard work of those who supported us, we had a really wonderful evening—successful financially and artistically. I couldn't have been more pleased for the Young Artists who received great applause, for the director and conductor, who also were cheered, and for the audience that obviously had a wonderful time."

JJ McKay and Joan and Craig Watjen served as the honorary co-chairs of the event. The decoration committee was chaired by décor designer Scot Richins. Sponsors of the event included Craig and Joan Watjen; Microsoft Corporation; Badgley, Phelps and Bell, Inc; Mary Frances Feider and W. Brandon Blazer; The Boeing Company; Classical KING FM; JPMorgan Private Bank; Mark Phillips; NBBJ, RealNetworks, Inc.; Eulalie Schneider; U.S. Trust; WaMu; Wells Fargo; and Drs. William and Gail Weyerhaeuser.

Wines from Northwest wineries Hedges Family Estate and Argyle Winery, and Sapphire Trill-a-Tinis were served at the reception, along with hors d'oeuvres. Party-goers were then treated to a fully staged performance of Verdi's *Falstaff*, conducted by Dean Williamson, directed by Peter Kazaras, and performed by Seattle Opera's stellar Young Artists in an all-new production. A multi-course meal followed, prepared by chef Dan Gilmore, and then the celebrants danced the rest of the night away. Four hundred opera-lovers attended the reception and performance of *Falstaff*, and 350 attended the dinner.

The Sapphire Trill-a-Tinis are a Bombay Sapphire cocktail created especially for Seattle Opera's gala event—they consist of one part Bombay Sapphire, one-half part strawberry liqueur, one part cranberry juice, three halved fresh strawberries, and three basil leaves.

Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program attracts more than 500 applicants each year. After a rigorous audition process, ten to twelve talented singers are chosen to train with the company for twenty weeks. The participants are emerging singers who have completed their college training and are embarking on professional careers in opera. The Young Artists study with an array of Seattle Opera staff members, coaches, and celebrated mainstage artists, and gain valuable performance experience in several outreach programs developed by Seattle Opera's Education Department. They complete their training with a fully staged opera at the Theatre at Meyedenbauer Center. Many graduates of the program have embarked upon the next stage of their careers with success, for example: former participants have appeared with more than fifty opera companies throughout North America and Europe, including several who have gone on to perform mainstage roles at Seattle Opera.

For more information about Seattle Opera and the Seattle Opera Gala, visit www.seattleoperagala.org.

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

HC 4/04/07