



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

NEWS

Seattle Opera Dedicates Upcoming *Hoffmann* Performances To Gertie Sprenger

Seattle—Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins announced April 25 that the upcoming performances of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann* will be dedicated to the memory of Gertrude E. (Gertie) Sprenger, who passed away at the age of 91 on April 8, 2005. As a Seattle Opera trustee (she was one of only four "life-time" members of the Board) and Opera Guild member, Gertie Sprenger served for more than 30 years as one of the company's strongest advocates for opera in schools. She was also a champion of Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program.

"Gertie was determined that Seattle Opera would speak to young people and, until the day she died, she worked to introduce the young to opera," said Jenkins in a tribute written for the *Hoffmann* program. "Age in Gertie's case certainly did not in any way lessen her enthusiasm or, more particularly, hinder her relation to the young. In some ways, the best testimonial to her connection with youth was the attendance at her memorial: this was no congregation of people her own age. Fully half were in their thirties or younger."

Born Gertrude Ellen Davis in Valdez, Alaska, she liked to tell how she first heard opera on Victor Red Seal 78-rpm records. Her family played the records on a wind-up gramophone in their tent home as her railroad surveyor father moved from campsite to campsite for his job.

After the family moved to Tacoma, Gertie Sprenger graduated from Lincoln High School and the College of Puget Sound (known today as University of Puget Sound). She married Jack Sprenger in 1935. The couple eventually settled in Auburn, where they became founders of the Auburn Symphony Orchestra and the Auburn Arts Commission. Gertie Sprenger remained an Auburn arts commissioner until her death.

Gertie Sprenger also brought her passion for opera into the Auburn schools as part of the the SOS (Seattle Opera in Schools) program. Her "Soup with Gertie" party welcomed members of Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program every year to Auburn, and she always made sure that the city was one of the concert stops for the Young Artists Program.

Today, Stephen Sprenger carries on his mother's legacy as a member of Seattle Opera's Board of Trustees. Gertie Sprenger is survived not only by Stephen Sprenger, but also by her daughter, Susie Summerhill, of Sagle, Idaho; sons Jim, of Auburn; and Jay, of Seattle; four grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the Gertrude E. Sprenger Education Endowment at Seattle Opera, P.O. Box 9248, Seattle 98109-0248 or to the Scholarship Fund at First United Methodist Church, 100 N St. S.E., Auburn, WA 98002.

(over)

Les contes d'Hoffmann (The Tales of Hoffmann)

Music by Jacques Offenbach

Libretto by Jules Barbier

(after the play of the same title by Barbier and Michel Carré, based on the stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann)

In French with English captions

A new production, dedicated in memory of Gertrude E. Sprenger

Performances

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

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours with 2 intermissions

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

Matinee performances, May 8 and May 22, begin at 2:00 p.m.

All performances in Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Ticket Information

Ticket Prices: \$42-\$129

Student Matinee Tickets for May 22: \$15

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

Group Sales: 206-676-5587

Credit Cards Accepted: American Express, VISA, MasterCard

Online Orders: www.seattleopera.org

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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.