



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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**Bellini's Romantic Masterpiece
I Puritani Opens May 3**

Love, Swordfights, and Soaring Melodies

Seattle Opera Premiere

Seattle—For the first time, Seattle Opera presents Bellini's *bel canto* masterpiece *I Puritani*, with performances on May 3, 4m, 7, 10, 11m, 14, 16, and 17, 2008 at McCaw Hall. Bellini's opera, acknowledged as a "brilliant success" since its premiere in 1835, is rarely performed because it demands singers of the highest caliber to accomplish the dazzling arias and ensemble pieces. Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins has long wanted to present this opera, but he waited 25 years to assemble two exceptional casts to sing the leading roles.

"Singing has been what has drawn people to opera for the last 400 years, and no opera relies on great voices more than *I Puritani*," said Jenkins. "I am proud to say that we have two great casts who should do justice to Bellini's genius."

Peter J. Hall's gorgeous costumes, originally created for the Metropolitan Opera, were inspired by the Cavalier fashions of the opera's story and the lush romanticism of Bellini's period. A new set was designed specifically for this production by Seattle Opera veteran Robert A. Dahlstrom. The massive steel castle built by Seattle Opera's Scenic Studios is one of the heaviest sets constructed by the company (steel was used in place of wood for its strength, as the opera requires a large chorus to assemble on various levels of the set). Stage director Linda Brovsky returns to Seattle Opera to direct this premiere. Lighting design for *I Puritani* is by Thomas Hase.

Conductor Edoardo Müller returns to Seattle Opera for this production. He made his Seattle Opera debut conducting Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* in 1991, and has since returned for Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia* in 1992 and 2000, Puccini's *Turandot* in 1996, Bellini's *Norma* in 1994 and 2003, and Rossini's *Italiana in Algeri* in 2006.

French soprano Norah Amsellem (Elvira), American tenor Lawrence Brownlee (Arturo), Polish baritone Mariusz Kwiecien (Riccardo), and American bass John Relyea (Giorgio) perform the leading roles of *I Puritani* on May 3, 7, 10, 14, and 17.

Amsellem previously appeared at Seattle Opera as Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and regularly interprets the heroines of Italian opera at such houses as Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Covent Garden, and Vienna State Opera. A former member of Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program, Brownlee's international career has taken him to La Scala, Covent Garden, and the Met, as well as earning him both the Marian Anderson Award and the Richard Tucker Award in 2006 (making him the first opera singer to win both awards in same year). Both Kwiecien and Relyea have received the Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Award: Kwiecien for the title role of *Don Giovanni* (2006/07) and Relyea for the four villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann* (2004/05). Kwiecien, who in eight years has sung almost 100 performances at the Metropolitan Opera, sings regularly in Vienna, Paris, London, and his native Poland. Relyea, who made his Met debut in 2000, has also become a frequent artist at the Metropolitan Opera and has often appeared in major roles in London, Paris, Vienna, and Munich.

Cuban-American soprano Eglise Gutiérrez (Elvira), American tenor Bradley Williams (Arturo), American baritone Morgan Smith (Riccardo), and Russian-Israeli bass Denis Sedov (Giorgio) perform the leading roles of *I Puritani* on May 4, 11, and 16.

Gutiérrez makes her Seattle Opera debut in this production, following rave reviews of her *bel canto* performances at Teatro Colón, Santa Fe Opera, Wexford Festival, and the Opera Orchestra of New York (which performs at Carnegie Hall), among others.

Williams also makes his Seattle Opera debut during these performances; this young tenor has an extensive *bel canto* repertoire, having sung the heroes of Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini in houses throughout Europe and the United States. Smith, a Northwest resident and former Seattle Opera Young Artist, returns to the company after critically acclaimed Seattle Opera performances of Silvio in *Pagliacci* and the title role in *Don Giovanni*.

Sedov last appeared at Seattle Opera as Mozart's Figaro in 1997. Recent roles for Sedov include King of Scotland in Handel's *Ariodante* (which was recorded for Archive D.G.), Figaro, and Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*.

Tickets for *I Puritani* start at \$25 and are available by calling 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619 or through www.seattleopera.org.

A special Mother's Day Tea will be held in the Norcliffe Room of McCaw Hall on May 11. Tickets for the 12:30 p.m. tea and the 2:00 p.m. performance are sold separately. For more information, see www.seattleopera.org.

I PURITANI

Seattle Opera Premiere

Music by Vincenzo Bellini
Libretto by Count Carlo Pepoli
In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

8 Performances: May 3, 4m, 7, 10, 11m, 14, 16, and 17, 2008

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours and 30 minutes including two intermissions

Evening performances start at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$25-\$162

Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 206.389.7676/800.426.1619

Online Orders: www.seattleopera.org

Artists

Elvira: Norah Amsellem/Eglise Gutiérrez†*
Arturo: Lawrence Brownlee/Bradley Williams†*
Riccardo: Mariusz Kwiecien/Morgan Smith*
Lord Gualtiero Walton: Joseph Rawley
Giorgio: John Relyea/Denis Sedov*
Enrichetta: Fenlon Lamb†
Sir Bruno Robertson: Simeon Esper

Conductor: Edoardo Müller
Stage Director: Linda Brovsky
Set Designer: Robert A. Dahlstrom
Costume Designer: Peter J. Hall
Lighting Designer: Thomas C. Hase
Hair and Makeup Designer: Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions: Jonathan Dean

Scenery: Seattle Opera
Costumes: The Metropolitan Opera

* On May 4, 11, and 16, 200, only

† Company debut

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

Lawrence Brownlee, Fenlon Lamb, Joseph Rawley, and Morgan Smith are former Seattle Opera Young Artists.

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***I Puritani* Production Sponsors:**

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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. 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 and fifty states.

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