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**Seattle Opera Announces 2008 International Wagner Competition
Auditions to be held by invitation-only
in London, Munich, New York and Seattle**

**Second International Wagner Competition will be funded
by Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences**

Seattle—General Director Speight Jenkins has announced that Seattle Opera’s second International Wagner Competition will take place on August 16, 2008 in Seattle. Seattle Opera’s first International Wagner Competition in August, 2006 was created by Seattle Opera to identify and recognize qualified, emerging opera singers who demonstrate clear promise of an important career in the Wagnerian repertoire.

The competition, which generated enthusiastic audiences and critical acclaim in its first year, is open to professional singers between the ages of 25 and 39, worldwide, who have had the training and experience necessary to perform Wagnerian roles. Nominees are currently being solicited from general directors of opera companies, artist representatives, and an international panel of established opera professionals. Auditions, which are by invitation only, will be held this fall in London, Munich, New York, and Seattle.

The 2006 International Wagner Competition generated applications from all over the world, with finalists hailing from Ireland, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Soprano Miriam Murphy from Ireland and baritone James Rutherford from England took top honors and cash prizes of \$15,000 each.

The International Wagner Competition is made possible by a generous contribution from the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences.

“From the moment that Susan Hutchison, Executive Director of the Simonyi Fund, announced it would continue its support of the International Wagner Competition, we have been planning for 2008,” said General Director Speight Jenkins. “We drew very fine artists to the first competition, and with the immense amount of global attention it received in 2006, we expect to audition an even larger pool of worthy contestants this time.”

For the auditions, each candidate is expected to prepare several arias in the original language, from the Wagner repertory. They will sing two arias at their initial audition. From the pool of candidates, Jenkins and conductor Asher Fisch will select no more than eight finalists and two alternates for August 16, 2008 competition itself—a full-orchestra concert at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall in Seattle, Washington. Two winners will each receive a cash award of \$15,000, as well as the possibility of an engagement with Seattle

Opera (four of the eight finalists in 2006 have future engagements with Seattle Opera).

Said Irish soprano Miriam Murphy, one of the 2006 winners: “Since winning the International Wagner Competition, I have had incredible interest from houses all over Europe and America. As the Wagnerian voice is a rare commodity, when you win a competition of this calibre people suddenly take you very seriously. Seattle Opera’s reputation for Wagner is second to none, so to have been recognised there has meant that I am now, over the next three years, covering Isolde, Kundry, and Brünnhilde for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Bastille, the Liceu in Barcelona, and best of all, I return to Seattle to take part in their production of the *Ring*. I can definitely say that all these offers have come from my competition success in Seattle. As with everything, however, there has to be a down side and it is that my win has curtailed my social life dramatically— as I have so much music to learn!”

Since 1975, with the presentation of its first *Ring* cycle, Seattle Opera has built an international reputation for being the leading presenter of Wagner repertoire in the United States. This Wagner tradition began under the leadership of the company’s founding general director, Glynn Ross, and has continued under the leadership of Speight Jenkins. During Jenkins’ tenure, Seattle Opera has completed the formidable artistic feat of presenting not only two new productions of Wagner’s *Ring des Nibelungen* but new productions of the other six major Wagner operas. In August 2007, Seattle Opera will launch its 2007/08 season with Wagner’s *Flying Dutchman*. One of the finalists of the 2006 International Wagner Competition, Jason Collins, will make his debut with Seattle Opera in the role of the Steersman.

“The first competition was a sensation!” noted the Simonyi Fund’s executive director, Susan Hutchison. “While we eagerly awaited the judges’ decision, Speight gave the audience an opportunity to vote, too. I’m sure they will all want to return in 2008 to cast their ballots again. It will be another great evening of music, talent, and drama!”

Seattle Opera 2008 International Wagner Competition

Timeline

Participation in the Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition, which is by nomination only, is open to singers between the ages of 25 and 39, worldwide. Preliminary rounds of the competition will be held in London, Munich, New York, and Seattle. Speight Jenkins and members of an advisory panel will select no more than eight finalists and two alternates for the final competition. The final competition will be a full-orchestra concert at McCaw Hall on August 16, 2008. Tickets are scheduled to go on sale in 2008. Two winners of the competition will each receive an unrestricted cash grant of \$15,000.

Preliminary Round

Candidates of proven ability may be nominated by agents, general directors, and other established professionals in the field of opera. Nominations will be reviewed in advance of the preliminary rounds. Nominees should have had professional training and performance experience, with appropriate preparation for the Wagner repertory. Nominees must be between the ages of 25 and 39. ***There are no application forms and general letters of interest will not be accepted – candidates must be nominated to be eligible for the competition.*** CDs of the nominees, ideally singing Wagner and accompanied by orchestra or piano, must be submitted to Seattle Opera postmarked prior to July 1, 2007. Artists who are selected to audition will be notified no later than August 10, 2007. Nominees should prepare at least two Wagner arias (preferably more) in German. Auditions will be held in Munich on September 4 and in London on September 5. Auditions will take place in New York on December 3 and 4 and in Seattle later in December. Finalists, who will appear in the August competition concert, will be announced by January 1, 2008.

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.

Seattle Opera is grateful to the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences for their generous support of the International Wagner Competition.

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