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**Seattle Opera Announces Finalists
For International Wagner Competition**

**Eight Singers Chosen from Auditions in Berlin, Vienna,
London, Paris, New York, and Seattle**

**Competition Will Be Held August 19 at McCaw Hall
Tickets Go on Sale April 10**

Seattle—Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins announced today the names of the eight finalists and two alternates in the company's **first** International Wagner Competition. This event will feature eight opera singers, between the ages of 25 and 40, competing for **two** \$15,000 prizes in a concert with full orchestra on August 19, 2006, at McCaw Hall. Tickets for this event will go on sale on April 10, 2006.

Finalists:

Carolyn Betty, soprano, auditioned in New York
Jason Collins, tenor, auditioned in Seattle
Dorothy Grandia, soprano, auditioned in London
Paul McNamara, tenor, auditioned in Berlin
Miriam Murphy, soprano, auditioned in London
James Rutherford, baritone, auditioned in London
Andrew Lindsay Sritheran, tenor, auditioned in London
Carsten Wittmoser, bass, auditioned in Berlin

Alternates:

Maria Jooste, soprano, auditioned in New York
Philip O'Brien, tenor, auditioned in London

Last summer, during the run of Seattle Opera's *Ring des Nibelungen*, Jenkins announced the creation of the Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition, made possible by a generous contribution from the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences. Since 1975, with the presentation of its first *Ring* cycle, Seattle Opera has built an international reputation for being the leading presenter of the 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 Jenkins. (During the Jenkins administration, Seattle Opera has completed the daunting artistic feat of presenting not only two original productions of Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen* but original productions of all ten of Wagner's major operas.) The Seattle

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Opera International Wagner Competition, as an extension of Seattle Opera's commitment to Wagner, has been established to identify and recognize opera singers who demonstrate clear promise of an important career in the Wagner repertoire.

"Speight realized that Seattle Opera, as the preeminent Wagner company in the United States, could also take a leadership role in discovering and promoting outstanding young singers who show promise of major careers in the Wagner repertoire," said John F. Nesholm, chairman of the Seattle Opera Board of Trustees.

Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition

The Competition

The final competition concludes with a full-orchestra concert at McCaw Hall on August 19, 2006, during the run of Seattle Opera's summer presentation of Richard Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*. There will be two winners of the competition, and each will receive an unrestricted cash grant of \$15,000.

Preliminary Auditions Held in Berlin, London, Paris, New York, and Seattle

Between November and December 2005, Jenkins listened to auditions in Berlin, London, Vienna, Paris, New York, and Seattle. Although he had planned to select only six finalists and two alternates, the quality of voices that he heard led him to pick eight finalists and two alternates. The goal was to locate artists ready to launch into major Wagner roles, said Jenkins, who were between the ages of 25 and 40.

Candidates of proven ability were nominated by agents, general directors, and other established professionals in the field of opera.

Competition Underwritten by the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences

The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences awarded a grant of \$300,000 to Seattle Opera for the Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition and for Seattle Opera's elementary school opera project, *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins*, a new project for the Seattle Opera program "Opera Goes to School" (for more information on "Opera Goes to School" and *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins*, see <http://www.seattleopera.org/company/education/>).

"This gift recognizes Seattle Opera's unique role in presenting Wagner's great works and its reputation for attracting the best singers and enthusiastic audiences from around the world," said Charles Simonyi, when announcing this grant last summer. "In addition, our gift embraces the mission of the foundation: Access to Excellence. Seattle Opera represents excellence in every way."

More Information on Finalists and Alternates

Carolyn Betty

Soprano

Birthplace: Wilmington, DE

Auditioned in New York

A graduate of the Pittsburgh Opera Center, American soprano Carolyn Betty's recent engagements include Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen* at Pittsburgh Opera, Vitellia in

Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito* and Anna Murrant in Weill's *Street Scene* at the Wolf Trap Opera, Annina in Verdi's *Traviata* and Nanny in Dominick Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Fiordiligi and the title role of Samuel Barber's *Vanessa* at the Curtis Institute of Music. In concert at the Hollywood Bowl, she has sung in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Howard Shore's *Lord of the Rings Symphony* with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. Her other concert engagements have included First Flowermaiden in Wagner's *Parsifal* at Los Angeles Philharmonic, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at Pittsburgh Symphony; Rosalinde in selections from Johann Strauss, Jr.'s *Fledermaus* at National Symphony Orchestra, Handel's *Messiah* with the Baltimore Symphony, and recitals with Stephen Blier with both The New York Festival of Song and Wolf Trap Opera. Betty was a winner of the 2002 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Her other awards include a 2004 Richard Tucker Study Grant, the 2000 Richard Gaddes Career Grant, a 2002 Sullivan Award, and a 2003 Shoshana Foundation Award. She has also gained recognition from the George London Foundation and the MacCallister Awards.

Jason Collins

Tenor

Birthplace: Columbia, SC

Auditioned in Seattle

In 2005, American tenor Jason Collins made his debut at Arizona Opera as Erik in Wagner's *Fliegende Holländer*; at Kentucky Opera as Lenski in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and at Austin Lyric Opera as Zinovy in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Other roles for Collins include Steuermann in *Der fliegende Holländer* and Peter Quint in Britten's *Turn of the Screw* at Pittsburgh Opera, Chevalier de la Force in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* and Beppe in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* at Glimmerglass Opera, Narraboth in Richard Strauss's *Salome* at Fort Worth Opera, and Drum-Major in Berg's *Wozzeck* with Opera Festival of New Jersey. With Opera Company of Philadelphia, he has sung Malcolm in Verdi's *Macbeth*, Dancaire in Bizet's *Carmen*, and Elder Gleaton in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*. Collins sang Schweik in Kurka's *Good Soldier Schweik* at the Chicago Opera Theater, a role which he also sang on the 2003 Cannes Awards-nominated recording for Cedille Records. He also has appeared at Bard Festival and Nashville Opera. In concert, Collins has appeared with Pacific Symphony, American Symphony Orchestra at Lincoln Center, IRIS Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and Stockton Symphony among others. A native of South Carolina, Collins' awards and scholarships include the 2005 Richard F. Gold Career Grant, the 2000 Mario Lanza competition, the Lucrezia Bori prize for foreign study, the Alice Tully scholarship, and the Tatiana Troyanos scholarship.

Dorothy Grandia

Soprano

Birthplace: Mt. Kisco, NY

Auditioned in London

Dutch-American soprano Dorothy Grandia has appeared with New York Opera Forum and Austin Lyric Opera in the U.S., and with Het National Ballet Orkest, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, and Dutch Radio Choir in the Netherlands. Recent performances include the roles of Senta in Wagner's *Fliegende Holländer* at Opera Zuid, Gerhilde in Wagner's *Walküre* and Echo in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Concertgebouw, Anton Webern's *Songs for Soprano* at Dutch National Ballet Company, and Britten's *War Requiem* at Residentie Orkest of The Hague. Other roles in her repertoire include Leonora in Verdi's *Forza del Destino*, Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen*, the Marschallin in

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Richard Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*, and Mimì in Puccini's *Bohème*. Grandia trained at the Mannes Conservatory in New York.

Paul McNamara

Tenor

Birthplace: Dublin, Ireland

Auditioned in Berlin

Irish tenor Paul McNamara made his opera debut in Opera Theatre Company's stage and television production of Haydn's *Infedeltà delusa*. Since then, he has appeared at Opera Ireland, Oper Kiel, Landestheater Neustrelitz, Theater Bielefeld, Staatstheater Cottbus, Staatstheater Meiningen, Cape Town Opera, Wiesbaden Maifest, Buxton Festival, Aldeburgh Proms, International Janacek Festival in Brno, and festivals at Covent Garden, Poznań, and Batignano. The roles in his repertoire include the title role in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Erik in Wagner's *Fliegende Holländer*, Lenski in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Canio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, the Prince in Dvorak's *Rusalka*, Narraboth in Richard Strauss's *Salome*, Bacchus in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Tichon in Janacek's *Kata Kabanova*, the tenor roles in Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen*, Guido Bardi in Zemlinsky's *Eine florentinische Tragödie*, and Christian in Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. McNamara will debut at the Grand Théâtre de Genève as Augustin Moser in Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. His many prizes and awards include the opera scholarship of the Royal College of Music in London and the Bayreuth Bursary of the British Wagner Society.

Miriam Murphy

Soprano

Birthplace: Dublin, Ireland

Auditioned in London

During her time at DIT College of Music in Dublin, Miriam Murphy won every major Irish competition, including the Joan Sutherland Trophy in the Dr. Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition, the Gervase Elwes Cup at the Dublin Feis Coeil, and the Yamaha International Foundation Bursary. More recently, the Irish soprano won the Bayreuth Bursary and the first Rita Hunter Bursary to be awarded. Murphy has performed with Opera Ireland and the Opera Theatre Company as well as touring Ireland with Leinster Opera Studio. Her recent roles include Lady Macbeth in Verdi's *Macbeth* and Santuzza in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* with English Touring Opera. In concert, she has sung Donna Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for Opera Ireland, Elizabeth in Verdi's *Don Carlos* at the Royal Albert Hall, and the title role of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. Other concert appearances include Verdi's *Requiem* at the Barbican, Beethoven's *Mass in C* at the National Concert Hall in Dublin, and Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* for the BBC Proms, a work that she has also recorded with Edward Carl and the Royal Academy Orchestra.

James Rutherford

Baritone

Birthplace: Dulwich, England

Auditioned in London

Baritone James Rutherford was named a BBC New Generation Artist in 2000. Trained at Royal College of Music and National Opera Studio in London, Rutherford has appeared as Figaro in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* at Opera National de Paris, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, and Glyndebourne Touring

Opera. Other roles include Köthner in Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and First Shepherd in Richard Strauss's *Daphne* for Royal Opera Covent Garden, Verdi's Falstaff for British Youth Opera, the Forester in Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen* for Welsh National Opera, Theseus in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* for Opera North, Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress* for English Touring Opera, and Jokanaan in Richard Strauss's *Salome* for Opera de Montpellier. He has been recorded by Harmonia Mundi singing Argante in Handel's *Rinaldo*, a role that he has sung at Deutsche Staatsoper and at the Montpellier and Innsbruck Festivals. In concert, this English singer has appeared with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Sudwestrundfunk Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and BBC Philharmonic, among others. In recital, Rutherford has sung throughout the U.K., including performances with Graham Johnson's Young Songmakers Almanac, BBC Radio 3, and Royal Dublin Society, as well as at numerous festivals. In the U.S., he has appeared as Donner in Wagner's *Rheingold* at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Andrew Lindsay Sritheran

Tenor

Birthplace: Wellington, New Zealand

Auditioned in London

New Zealander Andrew Sritheran began his studies at the Wellington Conservatorium and then at Royal Northern College of Music in the United Kingdom. His awards include First Prize from the Wagner Society (London) in 2002 and the Bayreuth Bursary in 2004. Sritheran became a member of Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera in 2005. This young tenor has performed Don José in Bizet's *Carmen* for the Aberdeen International Youth Festival, a series of Opera Gala concerts throughout England, and Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* for Clonter Opera. In the 2005/06 season, he sings Snout in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Malcolm in Verdi's *Macbeth* for the Royal Opera.

Carsten Wittmoser

Bass

Birthplace: Essen, Germany

Auditioned in Berlin

German singer Carsten Wittmoser joined the Staatsoper Stuttgart ensemble in 1997, where he sang such roles as Basilio in Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*. Three years later, he became a member of the opera ensemble of the Theatre in Linz, where his roles included Don Alfonso in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, the Hermit in Weber's *Freischütz*, Banquo in Verdi's *Macbeth*, and the Landgraf in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. Wittmoser also made his debut at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin as the Landgraf. In the 2004/5 season, he joined the Freiburg Opera and sang Raimondo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Ramfis and the King in Verdi's *Aida*, the Doctor in Berg's *Wozzeck*, and Vodnik in Dvorak's *Rusalka*. In the 2005/06 season, Wittmoser became a member of Hamburgische Staatsoper. His roles there will include Dr. Bartolo in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*, Sarastro in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, and Sparafucile in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, among others. Recent Wagner roles include Fafner in *Das Rheingold* at the Bruckner Festival in Linz and King Marke in *Tristan und Isolde* in a concert performance at Volkstheater Rostock. Wittmoser has also appeared at Gergiev-Festival in Rotterdam, Bayerische Staatsoper, Orff Summer Festival in Andechs, and Vienna Volksoper.

Maria Jooste (alternate)

Soprano

Birthplace: Cape Town, South Africa

Auditioned in New York

Soprano Maria Jooste began her training at South African College of Music. Following her undergraduate work, she joined the Cape Town Opera Studio where her roles included Marcellina in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*, the High Priestess in Verdi's *Aida*, and Mother and Witch in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. In 2001, Jooste was a finalist in the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions, and she returned to South Africa that season to be a featured singer in the "Stars: Past, Present, and Future" concert. The following year, she won the Wagner section of the Liederkranz competition. While training at Juilliard, she was awarded the Janet Southwick Norwood Scholarship, the Arthur B. Barber Scholarship, and the John W. Drye, Jr. Memorial Scholarship in Voice. In 2003 and 2004, Jooste was a member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program at the Washington National Opera. Most recently, Jooste sang Ariadne in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Tulsa Opera.

Philip O'Brien (alternate)

Tenor

Birthplace: London, England

Auditioned in London

English tenor Philip O'Brien studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he became a Wolfson Scholar and won the Patrick Libby prize for acting. In 2005, he was a finalist in the Wagner Society Competition (London). Since leaving college, O'Brien has sung with Glyndebourne, Savonlinna Festival, Carl Rosa, and Opera Omnibus, among others. His recent roles have included Nemorino in Donizetti's *Elisir d'amore* at Bel Canto Opera, Radames in Verdi's *Aida* and Samson in Saint-Saens' *Samson et Dalila* at Kentish Opera, Alfredo in Verdi's *Traviata* at Co-Opera Ireland, Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at Oxford City Opera, the Prince in Dvorak's *Rusalka* at the Iford Festival, and Don José in Bizet's *Carmen* at the Aylesbury Festival. Future engagements include Froh in *Das Rheingold* with the Northern Wagner Orchestra.

International Wagner Competition Ticket Information

International Wagner Competition tickets go on sale to the public on April 10, 2006. Tickets are available through the Seattle Opera Ticket Office, 206-389-7676 or 800-426-1619, or in person at 1020 John Street, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tickets can also be purchased online at www.seattleopera.org.

International Wagner Competition

August 19, 2006

7:30 p.m.

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Tickets: \$42 to \$52

Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 800-426-1619 or 206-389-7676

Order through the Web: 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 presentation of the works of Richard Wagner.

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