



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Rosemary Jones, 206-676-5559, rosemary.jones@seattleopera.org

Monte Jacobson (for visuals), 206-676-5545, monte.jacobson@seattleopera.org

**SEATTLE OPERA ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF WORLD'S FIRST
INTERNATIONAL WAGNER COMPETITION**

Miriam Murphy and James Rutherford Receive Prize of \$15,000 Each

Audience and Orchestra Name James Rutherford as their Favorite

98.1 Classical KING FM to Air and Stream Entire Competition, Saturday, August 26

August 19, 2006 – Seattle...From the stage of Marion Oliver McCaw Hall tonight, Speight Jenkins, general director of Seattle Opera, announced the two winners of the world's first International Wagner Competition, each of whom was awarded \$15,000. Soprano **Miriam Murphy from Ireland** and baritone **James Rutherford from England** were selected from among the eight finalists by a panel of five distinguished judges. Each sang two arias accompanied by members of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra led by conductor Asher Fisch. Murphy's selections were "Ewig war ich" from *Siegfried* and Isolde's Narrative and Curse from *Tristan und Isolde*. Rutherford's selections were the Fliedermonolog from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and "Die Frist ist um" from *Der fliegende Holländer*.

In addition, **Rutherford** was named the audience favorite from votes cast by the audience and the orchestra favorite by an Orchestra vote. Susan Hutchison from the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences presented the "Audience Choice" Award plaque to **Rutherford**.

Following her win in Seattle, Miriam Murphy sings the Woman Convict in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Royal Opera Covent Garden in September. She also appears with the Royal Philharmonic this fall.

Rutherford will appear in Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Edinburgh Festival in September.

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Alternate Philip O'Brien sang in place of soprano Carolyn Betty, who withdrew from the competition because of illness. The other finalists appeared as scheduled: Jason Collins, Paul McNamara, Carsten Wittmoser, Dorothy Grandia, and Andrew Lindsay Sritheran.

This inaugural competition will be broadcast in its entirety on 98.1 Classical KING FM and streamed from its Web site at www.king.org on Saturday, August 26, at 7:00 p.m. (Pacific Time).

Rutherford and Murphy were chosen from among the eight finalists of the competition, all of whom were selected last fall by Jenkins from auditions in Vienna, Berlin, London, Paris, Seattle, and New York. At the time of the auditions, all of the singers were between 25 and 40 and have not had more than one major Wagner role in an opera house.

The five judges Jenkins brought together for the competition all have experience with Wagner operas. They were mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, who sang Fricka in Seattle Opera's 2001 and 2005 *Rings*; Dr. Dorothea Glatt, assistant to Wolfgang Wagner (director of the Bayreuth Festival) for 28 years; Sir Peter Jonas, recently retired director of the Bavarian State Opera; tenor and director Peter Kazaras, who sang the role of Loge in Seattle Opera's 1995, 2001, and 2005 *Ring* productions; and director, author, and translator Stephen Wadsworth, who directed Seattle Opera's 2001 and 2005 *Rings*.

Once the singing has concluded and the judges are deliberating, audience and orchestra members had the opportunity to vote for the singer of their choice. The voting for audience favorite was so close that a recount was taken.

Seattle Opera's International Wagner Competition was made possible by a \$300,000 gift from the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences. The Simonyi grant also supports other education outreach at Seattle Opera. "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," commented Charles Simonyi.

More information about all the finalists and the judges can be found on the Seattle Opera Web site: <http://www.seattleopera.org/operas/iwc/>.

Founded in 1963, Seattle Opera has developed into one of the leading opera companies in the United States. The company, which has been dubbed the "Pacific Valhalla," is recognized internationally for its theatrically compelling and musically accomplished performances, especially of the Wagner operas. 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 three different productions of the *Ring*, in addition to acclaimed productions of all the other major operas in the Wagner canon.

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