



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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Speight Jenkins to Receive 2009 Mayor's Arts Award

Seattle—Seattle Opera's General Director Speight Jenkins will be one of five recipients of a 2009 Mayor's Arts Award, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels announced today. The awards, which are nonmonetary, recognize the contributions made by artists, arts and cultural organizations, and community members who make a difference through arts and cultural activities. The public nominates candidates for these awards, and the Seattle Arts Commission reviews the nominations and makes recommendations for the mayor's final selection. For 2009, the Seattle Arts Commission reviewed a record 360 public nominations.

"Speight has enriched the cultural, artistic and civic life of our city and helped position Seattle as an international arts destination," said Mayor Greg Nickels. "I am honored to be mayor of Seattle, where citizens such as Speight share their passion, talent, and innovation to make Seattle not only a wonderful place to live and visit, but a spectacular place to grow, learn, and create."

The recipients will be honored at the Mayor's Arts Awards ceremony at noon on Friday, September 4 during Bumbershoot: Seattle's Music & Arts Festival at Seattle Center's Northwest Court. The ceremony, which is free and open to the public, will feature the award presentations and the official opening of Bumbershoot's visual arts exhibits. In celebration of the Mayor's Arts Awards, the festival's visual arts exhibits will be open to the public free of charge, from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The five recipients of the 2009 Mayor's Arts Award are:

- Speight Jenkins, Seattle Opera general director
- Artist Trust
- Jesse Higman, visual artist
- Northwest Tap Connection
- Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestra

Speight Jenkins, celebrating his 25th season as general director of Seattle Opera, is recognized nationally as a politically active arts advocate, a leading authority on opera, and one of the nation's most influential and accomplished general directors. He became general director of Seattle Opera in 1983. At that time, he was already well known nationally through his hosting of the Metropolitan Opera telecasts, his music lectures, and his articles and reviews (he wrote for the *New York Post* and was once an editor of *Opera News*). Under Jenkins'

leadership, Seattle Opera's productions have captured international acclaim, boosting the economy and raising the profile of Seattle as a thriving arts city. He has strengthened and extended the company's reputation as a Wagner center—producing all 10 of Wagner's major operas, including two very different *Ring* productions. In August, Seattle Opera will again present the *Ring* cycle, which typically generates more than \$8 million in economic benefits for the city. This summer's production will bring visitors to Seattle from 22 countries, 46 states, and eight Canadian provinces.

Jenkins played a key role in the design and building of Seattle's stunning, award-winning opera house, Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, in 2003. He has also championed a nationally acclaimed education program that brings young opera artists to elementary schools and encourages thousands of high school students to learn about opera by attending dress rehearsals. Since its inception in 1998, Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program has helped to launch the careers of many singers. Former Young Artists have gone on to perform on Seattle Opera's mainstage and have appeared with major opera companies throughout the United States and Europe.

Jenkins is a graduate of the University of Texas and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. After gaining his law degree at Columbia University, he served four years in the United States Army as a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps. In addition to his law degree, Jenkins has received an honorary doctorate of humanities from Seattle University and an honorary doctorate of music from the University of Puget Sound. He is married, has two children and three granddaughters, and he has three labradoodle puppies in training.

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About Seattle Opera

SEATTLE OPERA'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES DEDICATES THE 2008/09 SEASON TO SPEIGHT JENKINS IN CELEBRATION OF HIS 25TH ANNIVERSARY AS GENERAL DIRECTOR.

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 operagoers from four continents, nineteen countries, and forty-nine states.