



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE: December 17, 2008

Press Contacts: Hilda Cullen, 206.676.5543, hilda.cullen@seattleopera.org
Sara Schweid, 206.676.5559, sara.schweid@seattleopera.org

Visuals Contact: Monte Jacobson, 206.676.5545, monte.jacobson@seattleopera.org

**Bizet's *Pearl Fishers*
Sizzles at Seattle Opera This Winter
January 10-24**

**Director Kay Walker Castaldo
Makes her Seattle Opera Debut**

Seattle—Seattle Opera's production of Bizet's sparkling love story *The Pearl Fishers* opens at McCaw Hall on January 10, 2009, with performances through January 24, 2009. This hypnotic love story from the composer of *Carmen* sails to the island of Sri Lanka where an exotic priestess with a long-buried secret is pursued by a strapping fisherman and his rugged best friend. Decorated with delightful duets, lusty choruses, and rhythmic dances, *The Pearl Fishers* is a tuneful treat for a cold winter.

Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins said *The Pearl Fishers* is one of the most frequently requested operas for the company, which he attributes, in part, to the beauty and color of Bizet's score. "The text is very important to French composers," Jenkins said. "They have a way of making what one can call 'sweet' and 'pretty' into something that is memorable and really wonderful."

American soprano Mary Dunleavy makes her Seattle Opera debut as the priestess Leïla, a role that she has sung in New York, St. Louis, and Philadelphia. Tenor William Burden, a favorite of Seattle audiences, returns to the company as Leïla's lover, Nadir, a role he has previously performed opposite Dunleavy. Baritone Christopher Feigum, a frequent performer at Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago, completes the triangle as Zurga. Patrick Carfizzi, who often performs at the Metropolitan Opera, will sing the role of the high priest Nourabad at all performances.

In the alternate cast, Russian soprano Larissa Yudina, a long-time soloist at the Mariinsky Theater and frequent performer of Mozart, Verdi, and Rossini heroines, makes her West Coast debut as Leïla. Also making his Seattle Opera debut is tenor Brian Stucki as Nadir, a role he recently sang at Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Former Seattle Opera Young Artist David Adam Moore sings Zurga. Yudina, Stucki, and Moore can be seen in *The Pearl Fishers* on January 11, 18, and 23.

This production also marks the Seattle Opera directorial debut of Kay Walker Castaldo. With over 100 opera credits to her name, Castaldo brings her production of *The Pearl Fishers* to Seattle from the Opera Company of Philadelphia, where she has served as director in residence and continues to guest direct. Seattle Symphony's own Maestro Gerard Schwarz conducts Bizet's rich and colorful score, and Peggy Hickey returns to Seattle to choreograph the dazzling dance numbers, a vital component of French opera. Sets for *The Pearl Fishers* were designed by Boyd Ostroff, with costumes from designer Richard St. Clair, both resident designers at the Opera Company of Philadelphia making their Seattle Opera debuts. Neil Peter Jampolis will create the lighting design.

Single tickets for *The Pearl Fishers* start at \$25, and are available through Seattle Opera's website, by calling 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619, or by mobile phone at mobile.seattleopera.org.

To view video clips and photographs from previous productions of *The Pearl Fishers*, read more biographical information about the artists, or get unique insights into this production from General Director Speight Jenkins, visit seattleopera.org/pearlfishers.

THE PEARL FISHERS

Music by Georges Bizet
Libretto by Michel Carré and Eugène Cormon
In French with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
8 Performances: January 10, 11m, 14, 17, 18m, 21, 23, and 24, 2009

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 50 minutes, including two intermissions
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Paris, Théâtre Lyrique, September 30, 1863
Previous Seattle Opera Presentations: April 1994

Artists

Leïla: Mary Dunleavy[†]/Larissa Yudina^{†*}
Nadir: William Burden/Brian Stucki^{†*}
Zurga: Christopher Feigum/David Adam Moore*
Nourabad: Patrick Carfizzi

Conductor: Gerard Schwarz
Stage Director: Kay Walker Castaldo[†]
Set Designer: Boyd Ostroff[†]
Costume Designer: Richard St. Clair[†]
Lighting Designer: Neil Peter Jampolis
Choreographer: Peggy Hickey
English Captions: Jonathan Dean

Sets and Costumes: Philadelphia Opera

*On January 11, 18, and 23, 2009 only

[†] Company Debut

William Burden's performance is made possible by generous financial support from the James and Sherry Raisbeck Lead Singers' Fund.

David Adam Moore is a former Seattle Opera Young Artist.

Individual support for The Pearl Fishers was provided by a donor in honor of Seattle Opera's extraordinary staff.

###

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.