



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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SEATTLE OPERA ANNOUNCES 2009 *RING* CAST

Debuts Include:

Janice Baird as Brünnhilde
Stig Fogh Andersen as Siegfried
Stuart Skelton as Siegmund

Returning Cast Members Include:

Greer Grimsley as Wotan
Margaret Jane Wray as Sieglinde
Richard Paul Fink as Alberich
Stephanie Blythe as Fricka/First Norn/Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*)

Robert Spano Conducts

Seattle—Seattle Opera's General Director, Speight Jenkins, officially announced today the international cast for the company's 2009 presentation of Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*. New to the production are American soprano Janice Baird as Brünnhilde, Danish tenor Stig Fogh Andersen as Siegfried, and Australian tenor Stuart Skelton as Siegmund.

Baird previously has appeared as Brünnhilde in numerous houses in Europe, including the Deutsche Oper Berlin and the Opéra de Marseille, but this will be her American debut as the Valkyrie. Andersen, a member of the Royal Theatre Copenhagen, has sung Siegfried in London, New York, Dresden, Munich, Berlin, Helsinki, and Mannheim among other cities. Besides appearing in Wagner roles throughout Europe, Skelton sang the role of Siegmund in the State Opera of South Australia's *Ring*, for which he received a Helpmann Award for "Best Male Performer in a Supporting Role in an Opera."

"With Stephen Wadsworth as director, every repetition of the *Ring* is rehearsed as if it were a new production," said General Director Speight Jenkins. "In this, our third repetition of the Cycle, I decided to cast several new singers, to vary the mix extensively. I think we have a cast that will give our audiences a rewarding and new experience in the Seattle *Ring*, and one that I hope will make the best *Ring* we have ever presented."

Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley returns as Wotan/The Wanderer, a role that he first sang for the 2005 production and for which he won the Seattle Opera Artist of the Year award. Also among the returning singers are baritone Richard Paul Fink as Alberich, soprano Margaret Jane Wray as Sieglinde and the Third Norn, and mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe. Blythe, who has sung Fricka and the Second Norn in all Seattle *Ring* performances since 2000, will add Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*) and switch to the First Norn.

Robert Spano, music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, also returns to Seattle Opera to conduct the *Ring*. Spano previously conducted his first *Ring* for the company in 2005. He has frequently led the New York Philharmonic and the orchestras of Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Spano has also conducted opera in Chicago, Houston, and Santa Fe, as well as for the Royal Opera Covent Garden and the Welsh National Opera, and he was for many years the Music Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

The 2009 *Ring* is directed by Stephen Wadsworth, with sets designed by Thomas Lynch, costumes designed by Martin Pakledinaz, and lighting designed by Peter Kaczorowski.

This team, highly active in theater as well as opera, has worked on several Seattle Opera productions. Wadsworth, Lynch, and Pakledinaz are the creative team behind Seattle Opera's new co-production with the Metropolitan Opera: *Iphigenia in Tauris*, opening October 13 in Seattle. This August, Seattle audiences saw the Wadsworth/Lynch production of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman (Der fliegende Holländer)* with Grimsley singing the title role. Wadsworth has been newly appointed the James C. Marcus Faculty Fellow: Director of Opera Studies at the Juilliard Opera Center. Lynch, Pakledinaz and Kaczorowski have all won prestigious awards for their work on Broadway and beyond.

Sets and costumes for this *Ring* were built by Seattle Opera's Scenic Studios and Costume Shop. The critically acclaimed sets designed by Lynch suggest the beauty of the Pacific Northwest's forests and mountains, while the costumes designed by Pakledinaz give the gods and goddesses of Wagner's operas a mythic look. Technical innovations and audience favorites in this production include the Rhine Daughters, who actually "swim" while suspended above the stage, and Fafner, the giant dragon who towers over Siegfried.

Seattle has long been recognized as the Wagner capital of America. Seattle Opera has presented Wagner's *Ring* for more than 30 years in a one-week cycle, which is the tradition of the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth, Germany. Under the tenure of Jenkins, the company has created new productions of the composer's ten canonical operas, including two complete productions of the *Ring*, a feat unmatched by any American opera company outside of the Metropolitan Opera. Seattle Opera first began producing the complete *Ring* in 1975. The Wadsworth production of Wagner's *Ring*, Seattle Opera's third *Ring* production, was first presented in the summer of 2001 and was repeated in the summer of 2005. Both the 2001 and 2005 cycles sold out nearly a year in advance. In 2005, Seattle Opera's *Ring* was enjoyed by audiences from 49 states and 19 countries.

Der Ring des Nibelungen

Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner

In German with English Captions

August 2009

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, Seattle, Washington

2009 *Ring* Ticket Information

Tickets to the *Ring* go on sale to *Ring* Fund donors in spring 2008. *Ring* tickets go on sale to the public in fall 2008. Information on the production, ticket sale dates, and how to make *Ring* Fund contributions, can be found at www.seattleopera.org.

OPERA	CYCLE I	CYCLE II	CYCLE III
<i>Das Rheingold</i> (7:00 p.m.)	(Sun) August 9	(Mon) August 17	(Tues) August 25
<i>Die Walküre</i> (6:00 p.m.)	(Mon) August 10	(Tues) August 18	(Wed) August 26
<i>Siegfried</i> (6:00 p.m.)	(Wed) August 12	(Thurs) August 20	(Fri) August 28
<i>Götterdämmerung</i> (6:00 p.m.)	(Fri) August 14	(Sat) August 22	(Sun) August 30

The Artists

Brünnhilde: Janice Baird†

Wotan/The Wanderer: Greer Grimsley

Siegfried: Stig Fogh Andersen†

Sieglinde/Third Norn: Margaret Jane Wray

Siegmund: Stuart Skelton†

Alberich: Richard Paul Fink

Fafner /Hagen: Daniel Sumegi

Fricka/First Norn/Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*): Stephanie Blythe

Loge: Kobie van Rensburg†

Erda/Rossweisse: Maria Streijffert†

Fasolt/Hunding: Andrea Silvestrelli†

Waltraute (*Walküre*)/Second Norn: Luretta Bybee

Freia/Ortlinde/Gutrune: Marie Plette

Mime: Dennis Petersen†

Froh: Jason Collins

Donner/Gunther: Gordon Hawkins

Woglinde/Forest Bird: Julianne Gearhart

Wellgunde/Grimgerde: Michèle Losier

Flosshilde/Schwertleite: Jennifer Hines

Helmwige: Sally Wolf

Gerhilde: Miriam Murphy†

Siegrune: Sarah Heltzel

Conductor: Robert Spano
Director: Stephen Wadsworth
Set Designer: Thomas Lynch
Costume Designer: Martin Pakledinaz
Lighting Designer: Peter Kaczorowski
Fire Designer and Flight Technical Director: Charles T. Buck
Hair and Make-up Designer: Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions: Jonathan Dean

Miriam Murphy was a winner of the 2006 International Wagner Competition. Jason Collins was a finalist in the 2006 International Wagner Competition. Julianne Gearhart, Jennifer Hines, and Sarah Heltzel are former members of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program.

† Seattle Opera debut

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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 all fifty states.

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