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Seattle Opera Pig Serenades Visitors to McCaw Hall



Seattle—McCaw Hall has a new singing star: Rusty the Pig. Created by Seattle Opera Scenic Studios, Rusty appears to be an ordinary statue—until passersby inspire him to sing!

The Opera's singing pig was one of 100 pigs decorated for Pigs on Parade 2007, a celebration of the Pike Place Market's 100th Anniversary. Seattle Opera Master Scenic Artist Kitty Kavanaugh designed the look of the Seattle Opera pig, incorporating many of the same techniques that the

Seattle Opera scene shop regularly uses to make “antique” statues and other set items for the company’s opera productions. Scenic Studios Manager Michael Moore composed the short Italian aria, “La Canzone del Maiale” (The Song of the Pig), that Rusty sings, and persuaded baritone John Boehr to give the pig a voice.

The digital recording of Boehr’s voice was transferred to electronic circuitry concealed in Rusty’s interior. An infra-red sensor detects motion in front of Rusty’s snout to activate the play-back portion of the circuitry, and an electronic timer limits his “performances” to a maximum of once every five minutes.

“People may not be aware that our bag of ‘backstage tricks’ frequently includes electronic as well as mechanical wizardry,” said Moore. “Rusty also has a concealed on/off switch, so that he can be allowed to take the occasional coffee break!” added Moore.

The Scenic Studios team has previously built such creatures as Fafner the Dragon, a star of Seattle Opera’s *Ring*, and recently completed the set for the Seattle Opera/Metropolitan Opera co-production of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which opens in October at Seattle Opera. Another recent project was a collaboration with glass artist Dale Chihuly to create the sets for the Seattle Symphony’s performances of a concert-staged version of Bartok’s *Bluebeard’s Castle*. In addition to building sets for Seattle Opera and other theater companies, the Scenic Studios also take on other building and design projects. In 2005, they came to the rescue of Seattle’s famed Monorail, manufacturing eight doors to replace those damaged during a collision.

“Those of us who work in the non-profit realm enjoy having the opportunity to expand our contributions to the community,” said Moore. “Everyone here enjoyed working on a whimsical project that will benefit the Market Foundation.”

Seattle Opera trustee Stephen A. Sprenger sponsored the Scenic Studios’ creation of Rusty. On October 12, 2007, Rusty and the other 99 pigs will be auctioned. All proceeds will benefit the Market Foundation’s efforts to fund the Market’s services for low-income people. But from now

until September, visitors to McCaw Hall can visit Rusty and see if they can inspire the pig to sing!

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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 forty-nine states.

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