



For Immediate Release

Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins

Local Grade School Children Perform with Seattle Opera Artists In An Original Adaptation of Wagner's *Rheingold*

Seattle—Seattle Opera's 2006 Opera Goes to School program starts this week with performances of *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins* at Lowell, 1058 E. Mercer, Seattle, on February 2 and 3 and at The Evergreen School, 15201 Meridian Ave N, Shoreline, on February 3. Throughout the month, Seattle Opera's innovative program will bring *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins* to five other schools in Yakima, Bellevue, Seattle, and Auburn (a complete list of schools and dates can be found below).

The script for *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins* was adapted from Wagner's libretto by Seattle Opera Education Associate Jonathan Dean, who captions all of Seattle Opera's *Ring* performances. Dean also leads the Seattle Opera's summer workshops for students, including the most recent one held during the company's performances of the *Ring*. While participating in a seminar on Wagner's works, **Dean met award-winning graphic novel artist P. Craig Russell** (whose comic book adaptation of the *Ring* was published in hardcover by Portland's Dark Horse Comics in 2002). With Russell's permission, Seattle Opera's Scenic Studios built *Theft of the Gold* sets inspired by Russell's art.

"I am frankly astonished every time I see a rehearsal by how cleverly Jonathan Dean adapted Wagner," said Speight Jenkins, Seattle Opera's general director. "I think it's a wonderful presentation for young people who have not yet attended a cycle and delightful for those who know the *Ring*. For me, *Theft of the Gold* is a real hit."

The teaching artists of the company's Opera Goes to School program will be working with third, fourth, and fifth graders in a four-day workshop ending with performances for their school. Singers from Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program will perform with the students. The Young Artists are professional opera singers who have completed their academic training and are embarking on their mainstage careers. **With the help of the singers and Teaching Artists, the students will perform *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins*, a version of Wagner's *Rheingold* created by Seattle Opera's Education Department, for their entire school.** The workshop encompasses all aspects of opera including acting, singing, theatrical movement and sound effects.

“Opera brings together all aspects of art—music, poetry and acting, as well as visual and vocal components. Opera can create a feeling and send a message. This is an opportunity for students to put on a production and interact with real-life singers, but most importantly it is a way to show that opera is accessible to anyone. Interest is generated for students *and* parents,” said Evergreen’s world language teacher, Renate Brendler-Grant.

Producing several hundred events and activities each year, Seattle Opera’s Education Department is among the largest and most active of its type among arts organizations in the country. In the Education Department’s Opera Goes to School program, professional Teaching Artists, singers from the Young Artists Program, and Education Department staff work with grade-school students and teachers to introduce them to the art form.

Previous projects for Opera Goes to School include *Magic Flute: A Hero’s Quest*, an adaptation of Mozart’s *Zauberflöte*, which was later recorded and released on CD by Starbucks.

Schools Participating in Opera Goes to School 2006, *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins*

Evergreen, 15201 Meridian Ave N, Shoreline, WA 98133

Lowell, 1058 E Mercer St, Seattle, WA 98102,

McKinley, 621 S 13th Ave, Yakima, WA 98902

Pioneer, 2301 M Street SE, Auburn, WA 98002

St. Benedict’s, 4811 Wallingford Ave, Seattle, WA 98103

Stevenson, 14220 NE 8th Street, Bellevue, WA 98007

Viewlands, 10525 3 Av NW, Seattle, WA 98177

Founded in 1963, Seattle Opera has developed into 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.

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Theft of the Gold: the Ring Begins is dedicated in memory of Gertrude E. Sprenger