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## ***Tristan und Isolde*, Opera's Ultimate Love Story, Opens Seattle Opera's New Season**

**US Operatic Debut of Swedish Soprano Annalena Persson**

**Tenor Clifton Forbis in a Signature Role**

**New Production by Kazaras, Israel, and Schuler**

**New Projection Technology at Seattle Opera**

**Seattle**—Seattle Opera begins its 2010/11 season on July 31, 2010, with Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in a new production conducted by **Asher Fisch**, Principal Guest Conductor at Seattle Opera, and directed by **Peter Kazaras** with sets and costumes by **Robert Israel** and lighting by **Duane Schuler**. The production features the return to Seattle Opera of tenor **Clifton Forbis** and the US operatic debut of Swedish soprano **Annalena Persson**.

One of the most influential musical works of all time, *Tristan und Isolde* is opera's greatest love story, a celebration of all-consuming passion by star-crossed lovers whose

longing for eternal bliss can only be fulfilled in death. Seattle Opera's **new production** of this masterpiece attempts to explore the concept of "**Tristan**" **time**: an experience of heightened awareness, of time that reaches back and forth into different dimensions, of the magnification of time. Inspiration for the production is derived in part from **Ambrose Bierce's** 1890 short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Kazaras, Israel, and Schuler have designed the production to take advantage of Seattle Opera's brand-new, state-of-the-art **projection technology suite**, which includes a Hipotizer media server and six Barco projectors. The production is dedicated to the memory of **Perry Lorenzo**, Seattle Opera's former Education Director, who died of cancer last December. *Tristan und Isolde* will run for seven performances: July 31, August 4, 7, 12, 15 (matinee), 18, 21, 2010.

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#### **TRISTAN CAST**

Swedish soprano **Annalena Persson (Isolde)** was described by *The Guardian* as "a Wagner singer to be reckoned with." In 2003, she won the fourth international competition for Wagner voices in Bayreuth. She has appeared with most of the major opera companies and orchestras in her native Sweden; roles have included Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde*, Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and Santuzza in *Cavalleria rusticana* for the Royal Swedish Opera; Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* and Kundry in *Parsifal* with Gothenburg Opera; and Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra. She has also sung Isolde for Basel Opera, Oper der Stadt Köln, Welsh National Opera, and performed the "Liebestod" in concert at the Tanglewood Festival with Kurt Masur. Other roles for Persson include Strauss's Salome, which she performed in a Peter Konwitschny production last fall in Amsterdam, and Chrysothemis. Although she sang Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> in concert with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, these Seattle performances as Isolde mark her US operatic debut.

American tenor **Clifton Forbis (Tristan)** made his Seattle Opera debut as Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca* in 2001 and returns now as Tristan, a role he has sung with Berlin Staatsoper, Opéra National de Paris, and Lyric Opera of Chicago, among others. Forbis recently sang the title role in Verdi's *Otello* in Dallas, and has also performed the role at Teatro alla Scala, and

in Dresden, Vienna, and Tokyo. He has sung Samson in Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* at the Metropolitan Opera, and in San Diego, Marseille, San Francisco, and Genoa, and his Siegmund in Wagner's *Walküre* has been seen at the Met, Canadian Opera Company, and Vienna Staatsoper, among others. Other performances for Forbis include Florestan in Beethoven's *Fidelio* in Barcelona and Madrid, the title role in Wagner's *Parsifal* at Paris Opéra, and Boris in Janáček's *Kát'a Kabanová* at Teatro La Fenice. Among his roles at the Met are the title role in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, the Drum-Major in Berg's *Wozzeck*, and Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Forbis has sung in concerts with the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood and with the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival, among many others.

Joining Persson and Forbis are Seattle Opera favorites **Margaret Jane Wray**, who will sing Brangäne, **Greer Grimsley**, who will sing Kurwenal, and **Stephen Milling**, who will sing King Marke. All three are veteran Wagner singers at Seattle Opera. **Wray** made her Seattle Opera debut as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* in 2000, a role she also sang, along with the Third Norn, in the 2001, 2005, and 2009 Seattle Opera *Rings*. In 2008, she sang Amneris in Verdi's *Aida* at Seattle Opera, a role she has also sung at the Metropolitan Opera. She regularly sings with many other opera companies in the US, France, and Germany. **Grimsley**, who won Seattle Opera's Artist of the Year for his Wotan/The Wanderer in the 2005/06 *Ring*, adds Kurwenal to the roles he has sung twice for Seattle Opera (the others being Wotan/The Wanderer, Telramund, and Scarpia); other roles with the company include Donner and Gunther in the *Ring*, Amfortas in *Parsifal*, the title role in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*, Escamillo in Bizet's *Carmen*, and Jack Rance in Puccini's *Fanciulla del West*. Grimsley returns to Seattle this summer after performing Wotan/The Wanderer in Berlin and Köln. **Milling** made his US debut at Seattle Opera as Fasolt and Hunding in the 2001 *Ring*, and was named Artist of the Year for his Gurnemanz in *Parsifal* in 2003. He sings frequently at home in Copenhagen with Royal Danish Opera, and has also performed with the opera companies in Vienna, Salzburg, Baden-Baden, Stuttgart, Berlin, London, Barcelona, Valencia, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Florence, Milan, Naples, and Rome.

#### **CONDUCTOR: Fisch**

A native of Jerusalem, Asher Fisch made his Seattle Opera debut in 2003 conducting Wagner's *Parsifal*, and returned to the company to conduct *Lohengrin* (2004) and *Der Fliegende Holländer* (2007), as well as *Der Rosenkavalier* (2006) and the Seattle Opera International Wagner Competitions of 2006 and 2008. In October 2007, Fisch was

named Seattle Opera's principal guest conductor. He has conducted Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, Verdi's *Macbeth* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Janáček's *Kát'a Kabanová* at Houston Grand Opera. As the former music director of the New Israeli Opera, he conducted many productions, including Puccini's *Trittico* and Ponchielli's *Gioconda*. He recently conducted Wagner's *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* and Verdi's *Falstaff* at Dresden's Semperoper. Fisch's many European engagements include conducting for Teatro alla Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper, Royal Danish Opera, and Paris Opéra-Bastille. He has also conducted the Munich Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, Orchestre National de France, Japan's NHK Symphony, and such leading North American orchestras as Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, and Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal.

**DESIGN TEAM: Kazaras, Israel, Schuler**

Although this production of *Tristan und Isolde* marks the first time director **Peter Kazaras** has staged Wagner, he has often sung Wagner, appearing as Loge in every performance of *Das Rheingold* at Seattle Opera from 1995 to 2005. On the mainstage he has directed *Norma*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Falstaff*. He returns this season to stage *Il barbiere di Siviglia* on the mainstage, and, with the Young Artists, *Don Giovanni*.

Kazaras is Artistic Director of Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program, and has directed the Young Artists' productions of *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Falstaff*, Britten's *Turn of the Screw* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a double bill of *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *Gianni Schicchi*, and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Kazaras has also directed productions for the Caramoor Festival, San Francisco Opera's Merola Program, Opera Cleveland, the Cabrillo Festival, Madison Opera, Santa Fe Pro Musica, Hartt School, the Academy of Vocal Arts, UCLA, and Chautauqua Institution. As a singer, Kazaras performed at Seattle Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Vienna Staatsoper, Houston Grand Opera, and San Francisco Opera, among others. Director of Opera and professor at UCLA, Kazaras has also taught at the Chautauqua Institution Vocal Department.

Designer **Robert Israel** made his Seattle Opera debut with Wagner's *Walküre* in 1985, a preview to his 1986 *Ring des Nibelungen*. He returned for Verdi's *Aida* and *Macbeth*, as well as Wagner's *Parsifal* (which opened McCaw Hall in 2003). Israel also designed the sets and costumes for Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* (co-produced with Houston Grand Opera and LA Opera) and Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* at Seattle Opera.

He also works with the Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, Vienna Staatsoper, Paris Opéra, De Nederlandse Opera, Royal Danish Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, New National Theatre of Tokyo, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, and the Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto. Israel served as a consultant on the design of McCaw Hall. An elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Israel is also a professor in the School of Arts and Architecture at UCLA.

**Duane Schuler's** lighting designs have been seen at Seattle Opera in Hagen's *Amelia*, Bellini's *Norma*, and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. His extensive work with the Metropolitan Opera includes the world premieres of Tan Dun's *First Emperor* and John Harbison's *Great Gatsby*; Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*; Verdi's *Traviata*, *Otello*, and *Luisa Miller*; Beethoven's *Fidelio*; Mozart's *Così fan tutte*; and Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*. Recent projects include Berg's *Lulu* for Teatro alla Scala, Puccini's *Fanciulla del West* for De Nederlandse Opera, and a Tchaikovsky trilogy of *Mazeppa*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *Pique Dame* for Opéra National de Lyon; just prior to this *Tristan* he lit *Elektra* for the Salzburg Festival. He is a frequent collaborator with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Baden-Baden Festival, Los Angeles Opera, and Santa Fe Opera, where he recently designed the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *Letter*. Schuler is also a founding partner of the theater planning and architectural lighting design firm Schuler Shook, with offices in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Dallas.

*Tristan und Isolde* opens on July 31 and runs through August 21. Single tickets start at \$25 and are available online at [seattleopera.org](http://seattleopera.org), by calling 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619, or by mobile phone at [mobile.seattleopera.org](http://mobile.seattleopera.org).

*Please note: the following artists list for Tristan und Isolde replaces all previously published or announced cast lists. Further information on the 2010/11 season and full biographies of the cast members can be found at [seattleopera.org](http://seattleopera.org).*

***Tristan und Isolde***

**Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner**

In German with English Captions

Premiere: Royal Court and National Theater, Munich, June 10, 1865

Last Seattle Opera Presentation: Summer 1998

**Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, Seattle, Washington**

**New Seattle Opera Production**

Seven Performances: July 31, August 4, 7, 12, 15 (matinee), 18, 21, 2010

Approximate Running Time: Four hours, 37 minutes

Evening performances begin at 6:30 pm, the Sunday Matinee at 2:00 pm

All performances at the Seattle Center Opera House

Single ticket prices start at \$25

Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 206-389-7676/800-426-1619

Online Orders: [www.seattleopera.org](http://www.seattleopera.org)

Isolde	Annalena Persson†
Tristan	Clifton Forbis
Brangäne	Margaret Jane Wray
Kurwenal	Greer Grimsley
King Marke	Stephen Milling
Melot	Jason Collins
Sailor/Shepherd	Simeon Esper
Steersman	Barry Johnson

Conductor	Asher Fisch
Director	Peter Kazaras
Set & Costume Designer	Robert Israel
Lighting Designer	Duane Schuler
English Captions	Jonathan Dean

†Company debut

Sets and Costumes: Seattle Opera

Production Sponsor: Kreielsheimer Endowment Fund

This production of *Tristan und Isolde* is dedicated to the memory of Perry Lorenzo.

Inspiration for this production derived in part from the short story “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce. To read the story, go to

[www.seattleopera.org/tristan](http://www.seattleopera.org/tristan) and click on “Director’s Notes.”

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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. Since 1975, Seattle Opera has presented 38 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 and fifty states.