



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

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SEATTLE OPERA RECEIVES A TECHNOLOGICAL BOOST WITH A \$750,000 WALLACE EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Four-Year Grant will be used to Increase Accessibility to Opera
Through New Technologies**

Seattle—Seattle Opera announced today that the company will receive a \$750,000 grant from the Wallace Foundation over the next four years to increase accessibility to opera through new and innovative practices.

“We are honored to be one of the recipients of the 2008 Wallace Excellence Awards,” said Seattle Opera Executive Director Kelly Tweeddale. “Seattle Opera has long been committed to exploring new technologies to enhance our audience’s experience and to increase exposure to our art form. We just finished a year-long exploration of how technology can enable us to deepen and broaden audience participation. The Wallace Excellence Award will allow us to take the recommendations and findings of our technology task force and turn them into real and practical applications.”

Seattle Opera’s Excellence Award initiative has been divided into four years, each with a distinct focus and emphasis:

- The first year will focus on **“Story-telling Through Technology,”** utilizing Seattle Opera’s internationally renowned production of Wagner’s *Ring* Cycle to form virtual communities outside of the traditional performance venues.
- The second year will employ the world premiere of *Amelia*, Seattle Opera’s first commissioned American opera, to create **“Community Connections Through Technology,”** establishing collaborative relationships with community groups and other arts organizations.
- In year three, by **“Experiencing Place Through Technology,”** Seattle Opera will debut a simulcast to introduce a wider cross-section of the public to the art of opera.
- In the fourth year, by **“Refining, Evaluating and Sharing Technology Applications,”** Seattle Opera will evaluate the success of the previous years’ activities through focus groups and

surveys, with the ultimate goal of producing a product that can be shared with other arts organizations.

“One of the greatest challenges we face is to remove the perception that opera is only for a select community,” said Tweeddale. “In fact, our experience has proven that opera is enjoyed by people of all ages, cultures, and demographics.”

“The Wallace Foundation Excellence Award will provide the opportunity, perhaps for the first time in Seattle Opera’s history, to utilize the innovative resources of our community and close the gap between Seattle Opera’s live performances and a wider potential audience. People will be able to experience opera in a variety of ways outside of the opera house, through new technologies that we hope, by the end of the four years, may create a new model of audience engagement.”

This is the second Wallace grant received by Seattle Opera. The first grant, in 2000, enabled the company to increase the scope of its Young Artists Program, which provides career guidance and training for young professional opera singers. Seattle Opera has a proven track record of engaging and growing new audiences through its educational programs and through organizations such as its BRAVO! Club (operagoers in their twenties and thirties), currently at a record number of 650 members.

The Wallace Excellence Awards are intended to build appreciation and demand for the arts. The mission of the Wallace Foundation is to increase learning and enrichment for everyone, with a special emphasis on the arts. The Foundation has taken a city-based approach, announcing two target cities each year since 2006 to receive Wallace Excellence Awards. Seattle and Minneapolis/St. Paul were the cities targeted for 2008. Seattle was chosen this year because of the city’s high concentration and variety of arts organizations and the arts community’s robust collaboration.

Seattle Opera is one of nine Seattle arts organizations to receive an Excellence Award, along with Seattle Art Museum, Pacific Northwest Ballet Association, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle Youth Symphony, Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame, One Reel, On the Boards, and SIFF (Cinema Seattle). The nine organizations will receive a total of \$6.1 million in grants from the Foundation. Another \$1.6 million has been designated to support audience building throughout the region, in a collaboration between the Wallace Foundation, the Washington State Arts Commission, and Seattle’s Mayor’s Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, to create a learning network for all Puget Sound arts organizations.

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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. 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 and fifty states.