



SEATTLE OPERA
SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

NEWS

For Immediate Release

Young Artists Carolyn Kahl and Sarah Heltzel Join Seattle Opera's 2005 *Ring*

Seattle—Two members of Seattle Opera Young Artists Program, Carolyn Kahl and Sarah Heltzel, have joined the cast of Seattle Opera's 2005 *Ring*. Both women, who shared the role of Cherubino in the Young Artists Program's production of Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* this spring, will be singing *Ring* roles for the first time in their careers. Carolyn Kahl will sing Wellgunde; Sarah Heltzel will sing Siegrune. They replace mezzo-soprano Laura Tucker, who has withdrawn from the 2005 *Ring* for personal reasons.

"Our young artists have over the past few years proved to have uniformly high quality. The fact that so many are succeeding on the world's great opera stages says a lot for the program. I'm delighted that both of these young women will take part in the *Ring*," said Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins. Since its inception in 1998, the Young Artists Program has launched the careers of such singers as tenor Lawrence Brownlee, soprano Indra Thomas, and tenor Brandon Jovanovich. Since leaving Seattle, singers from the Young Artists Program have appeared at such houses as Teatro alla Scala, the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera Covent Garden, and most of the major regional houses in the United States.

Mezzo-soprano Carolyn Kahl, a graduate of the University of Michigan, has been a member of the Young Artists Program for the past three seasons. She made her Seattle Opera mainstage debut as the Composer in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* in 2004. Wellgunde, a Rhine Daughter, appears in *Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*. To simulate swimming in the Rhine, the Rhine Daughters fly in harnesses (designed by Seattle Opera's Fire Designer and Flight Technical Director Charles T. Buck) to heights as much as 24 feet above the stage floor. Learning to "swim" and sing mid-air is a physical challenge that requires weeks of rehearsal by the Rhine Daughters and their backstage operators.

"My first reaction was: 'Wow, I get to fly, that's awesome!' followed by the realization that I am going to have the opportunity to watch and listen to some of the world's best singers all summer," said Kahl. "Singing Wellgunde this summer will be vocally and physically demanding. I think one always grows the most as an artist when being challenged. I am thankful that Speight Jenkins and Stephen Wadsworth have given me the opportunity to take the next step in my career."

Mezzo-soprano Sarah Heltzel graduated from the Manhattan School of Music. After one season with the Young Artists Program, Heltzel will make her Seattle Opera mainstage debut this summer as one of nine Valkyrie who appear in *Die Walküre*.

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After accepting the role, Heltzel said, “The Seattle Opera Young Artists Program has been invaluable in my transition from student into an artist in my own right. The vote of confidence from a major company like Seattle is a wonderful boost to my budding career.”

Seattle Opera’s Young Artists Program provides career guidance and training for young singers in all aspects of a career in opera. More than 500 singers applied to enter Seattle Opera’s 2004/05 Young Artists Program. Kahl and Heltzel were among the ten singers chosen for this season’s program.

The 2004/05 season has been a successful one for the Young Artists Program. All six performances of Mozart’s *Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) at the Theatre at Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue, Washington, sold out. The Young Artists sang in recital during the fall in Auburn, Bremerton, Everett, La Conner, Seattle, and Wenatchee, Washington and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. They also participated in *Opera Goes to School*, a Seattle Opera Education Department outreach program designed to develop elementary school students’ interest in the art form. This season, the Young Artists “workshopped” *Theft of the Gold: The Ring Begins*, an abridged, English version of Wagner’s *Rheingold*.

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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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