

SEATTLE OPERA

SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Press Contact: Gabrielle Nomura, 206.676.5559, gabrielle.nomura@seattleopera.org

Celebratory Weekend Salutes Speight Jenkins' 31 Years Leading Seattle Opera

**International Wagner Competition
7 p.m., August 7, 2014**

**Seattle Opera Day at MOHAI
11 a.m., August 9, 2014**

**Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner
6 p.m., August 9, 2014**

Seattle—After three decades, 92 productions, and more than 1,200 individual performances, **Speight Jenkins** is retiring from Seattle Opera in style! The company will celebrate the end of the Jenkins era, as well as its 50th anniversary, with three special events: the **International Wagner Competition** on Thursday, August 7, followed by **Seattle Opera Day at MOHAI** and the **Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner** featuring 15 of Seattle Opera's best loved singers on Saturday, August 9.

While Jenkins may be retiring from the company, he will continue to dedicate his life to opera, his chief passion, said **John Nesholm**, Chairman of the Seattle Opera Board.

“For 31 years, Speight Jenkins' bold, dynamic, and visionary ideas have profoundly impacted Seattle's growth as an arts and cultural destination. We are known throughout the world for our *Ring* cycle, and

this is because of Speight,” Nesholm said. “Speight gave us a taste for thought-provoking, musically superlative opera performances; fascinating post-show discussions; and a warm, gracious welcome at the top of the grand staircase before every performance. We gather to applaud this man who gave us countless experiences in the theater that can only be described as magic.”

The celebratory weekend in Jenkins’ honor kicks off with the International Wagner Competition (a.k.a. the “American Idol” of opera). An elite group of nine singers—all under 40—will go head-to-head singing the powerful, vocally demanding music that makes this German composer’s work so thrilling. With up to \$60,000 in cash prizes at stake, the singers have to wow a distinguished panel of judges in order to emerge with the first prize. In addition to the judges, both the audience and orchestra will play an important role by rewarding a \$5,000 prize to their favorite artist.

“Our auditions turned up a remarkable group of young Wagnerians,” said Jenkins, who first created the competition in 2006 as a means to identify and recognize emerging opera singers who demonstrate clear promise of an important career in the Wagnerian repertoire. “This year’s group of singers will make our third International Wagner Competition a thrilling and rewarding event.”

The competitors include **David Danholt, Helena Dix, Ric Furman, Suzanne Hendrix, Roman Ialcic, Tamara Mancini, Kevin Ray, Issachah Savage, and Marcy Stonikas**. Conductor **Sebastian Lang-Lessing**, who has extensive experience with Deutsche Oper Berlin, makes his Seattle Opera debut at the podium. This third competition is made possible by a generous contribution from the Nesholm Family Foundation.

The celebratory weekend continues on Saturday, August 9, 2014—a day proclaimed, both by King County and the City of Seattle, as “Speight Jenkins Day. In the morning, all ages can explore the wonderful world of opera, for free, at **Seattle Opera Day at MOHAI**.

Then, in the evening, join Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall for the **Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner**. A red carpet entrance will greet guests for this special black-tie event. Fifteen of the company’s favorite performers—including **Seattle Opera’s 2014 Artist of the Year, Kate Lindsey**, and superstars such as **Stephanie Blythe** and **Greer Grimsley**—are donating their fees in Jenkins’ honor, and will serenade the retiring General Director accompanied by full chorus and orchestra. **Delta Air Lines** is the Official Airline of the Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner.

The Speight Celebration Concert will be emceed by mezzo-soprano **Joyce Castle** whose hilarious performance as the Marquise of Berkenfield brought down the house in *La fille du régiment* (2013) last fall. Following his debut two days earlier conducting the International Wagner Competition, **Sebastian Lang-Lessing** shares podium duties with Maestro **Carlo Montanaro**, who earlier this season conducted the Seattle Opera premiere of *The Consul*. The concert will include scenes from masterpieces by Verdi, Wagner, Mozart, Puccini, Bizet, Gershwin, and many others.

Jenkins will greet and mingle with guests from the top of the staircase prior to the show, and during the intermission receptions, which are catered by Savor and include sparkling wine from Chateau Ste. Michelle.

The event, which is co-chaired by **Lyn and Jerry Grinstein** and **Laurel and John Nesholm**, concludes with an elegant reception and dinner held beneath a festive tent created specially for the event on the Kreielsheimer Promenade outside of McCaw Hall. Catering will be provided by Kaspars, wines by Novelty Hill | Januik, flowers by Kendra Yapple of Loves Me Flowers, and décor designed by Chihuly Garden Architect Richard Hartlage of Land Morphology.

International Wagner Competition

7:00 p.m., Thursday, August 7, 2014

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Seattle, Washington

Tickets start at \$46

Lead Sponsor – Nesholm Family Foundation

Honorary Co-Chairs & First Prize: Charles and Lisa Simonyi

First Prize – Anonymous, in honor of Speight Jenkins

Orchestra Choice Prize – Betty and Jack Schafer

Audience Choice Prize – Wagner and More

Seattle Opera Day at MOHAI

11-2 p.m., Saturday, August 9, 2014

Museum of History & Industry

Seattle, Washington

FREE

Before the Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner, come to **Seattle Opera Day at MOHAI**, a fun, interactive event for the whole family! Enjoy a sneak peek of the company's 2014/2015 season, watch sword fighting demonstrations, and see firsthand how performers are transformed with wigs and makeup. Competitors from the International Wagner Competition will serenade the audience with a short concert, and everyone will have the opportunity to play in an orchestra—of kazoos, that is!

The event is free; there is no charge for access to the MOHAI atrium throughout the duration of the open house. Visitors purchasing an admission ticket will be able to enjoy the entire museum.

Sponsors: Vulcan Real Estate, Seattle Opera, MOHAI, 4Culture, and Seattle Office of Arts & Culture.

Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner

6 p.m., Saturday, August 9, 2014
Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Seattle, Washington
Tickets start at just \$99

Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of the Speight Celebration Concert & Dinner
Speight Celebration Co-chairs: Lyn and Jerry Grinstein and Laurel and John Nesholm

Table Sponsors

Angel Table

Lyn and Jerry Grinstein
Lenore M. Hanauer
Brian Marks and Carol Maione
Nesholm Family Foundation
Drs. William and Gail Weyerhaeuser
Ann P. Wykoff

Gold Table

Maryanne Tagney and David Jones

Silver Table

Delta Air Lines
Bill and Sally Neukom

Sponsors:

Microsoft
The Boeing Company

The 2014/15 Season is in honor of Speight Jenkins.

For tickets and information, call 800-426-1619 or 206-389-7676 or visit www.seattleopera.org.

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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 50 states.