Seattle Opera expands programs, performances in 2017/18

Company to offer operas at new venues around town

Madame Butterfly, The Barber of Seville, Così fan tutte, Beatrice & Benedict, Aida come to McCaw Hall

SEATTLE—Opera is for everyone—and so is Seattle Opera’s 2017/18 season! There’s a new bilingual performance for elementary-school students, new performance venues such as Georgetown Steam Plant, a new mainstage collaboration with ACT Theatre and Seattle Symphony leaders, and even an outdoor performance offered free of charge. Regardless of background or socioeconomic status, this season offers ways for a broad audience to be able to experience opera; it’s an open invitation for the Pacific Northwest.

“We want to present opera in a way that reflects our time and place—so naturally, representing the diverse people of our region is important to us,” said General Director Aidan Lang. “Whether it’s Verdi or Mozart on our mainstage, or an opera with Muslim or LGBTQ characters presented in our community—opera speaks to the experience of being human which we share. This is why it’s crucial to reduce historic barriers that have made our art form, at times, inaccessible.”
In addition to five mainstage operas featuring the work of beloved composers like Verdi, Mozart, and Puccini, the company hopes to keep building an audience that’s diverse in age, race, and more following the success of As One (November, 2016). This story of a transgender woman performed at Washington Hall helped establish new community partners such as Pride Foundation, and also brought more young people and newcomers through the door compared to the company’s performances at McCaw Hall. (For example, the As One overall audience was 59 percent people under 50, versus only 27 percent people under 50 for a given mainstage performance). The effort to reach new viewers continues in 2017 at venues throughout Seattle, including Georgetown Steam Plant, where a war-torn, interfaith love story called The Combat (Monteverdi) will be performed. An American Dream (by composer Jack Perla and librettist Jessica Murphy Moo) returns following its 2015 premiere, this time in a new Seattle location. Our annual Frost Fest on Feb. 4, 2017 at Cornish Playhouse, introduces opera to young audiences with Cinderella en España, a story in English and Spanish; this 45-minute opera also plays Kirkland Performing Arts Center on March 19, and will tour schools statewide. Finally, in July 2017, Seattleites can bring a picnic if they choose while enjoying Opera Outside, offered free of charge.

The mainstage season at McCaw Hall kicks off with Puccini’s famous Madame Butterfly, Aug. 5-19, 2017. Stage director Kate Cherry’s “sublime, visually fantastic, must-see” show (stuff.co.nz) stars Lianna Haroutounian and Alexia Voulgaridou who each make company debuts as Cio-Cio-San. The performance also includes Seattle debuts for Alexey Dolgov and Dominick Chenes (Pinkerton); and the return of Weston Hurt (Sharpless), Renée Rapier (Suzuki), and Maestro Carlo Montanaro. This tragic tale of a reckless American naval officer and a trusting geisha he purchased as a temporary bride includes some of Puccini’s most famous music such as the radiant “Flower Duet,” Butterfly’s poignant arias, and a rapturous love song for the ages.
Inspired by true events, _Butterfly_ is an often painful reminder of racial and cultural injustice found throughout America’s history. Thus, _An American Dream_, a story depicting the incarceration of Japanese Americans, will provide an essential second perspective for _Butterfly_ audiences a month later in September, 2017. By showing these pieces in tandem, Seattle Opera seeks to emphasize Puccini’s intentional criticism of American attitudes toward Japan; such attitudes would later scar our own Pacific Northwest history during World War II.

The mainstage season continues with another new-to-Seattle production: _The Barber of Seville_ (Rossini), Oct. 14-28, 2017. Stage Director Lindy Hume returns following smash hit _The Wicked Adventures of Count Ory_ (2016) to delight audiences with colorful sets and costumes inspired by the seductive and playful spirit of southern Spain. This “riotously funny” (_The Australian_) prequel to _The Marriage of Figaro_ includes the company debut of soprano Sofia Fomina (Rosina). Also featured are Matthew Grills and Andrew Owens (Almaviva); John Moore and Will Liverman (Figaro); Kevin Glavin (Dr. Bartolo); Daniel Sumegi (Basilio); and Margaret Gawrysiak (Berta). Maestro Giacomo Sagripanti returns to conduct.

In the New Year, _Così fan tutte_ (Mozart) returns Jan. 13-27, 2018. Last seen in 2006, Jonathan Miller’s acclaimed modern-dress production may be “the funniest and most dramatically successful show Seattle Opera has ever staged” (_The Seattle Times_). This account of two buddies who test the faithfulness of their fiancées includes company debuts by Marina Costa-Jackson, Marjukka Tepponen (Fiordiligi); Ben Bliss, Tuomas Katajala (Ferrando); Ginger Costa-Jackson (Dorabella); Michael Adams (Guglielmo); and Maestro Paul Daniel. Returning artists include Hanna Hipp (Dorabella); Craig Verm (Guglielmo); Laura Tatulescu (Despina); and Kevin Burdette (Don Alfonso).

New to Seattle Opera is Hector Berlioz’s _Beatrice and Benedict_—a unique Seattle Opera premiere created through artistic collaborations. Seattle Symphony Orchestra Maestro Ludovic Morlot and ACT Artistic Director John Langs
make debuts as conductor and stage director, respectively for this performance, which runs Feb. 24-March 10, 2018. Based on Much Ado About Nothing, this work will kick off a city-wide event, Seattle Celebrates Shakespeare.

“This is a unique and unprecedented opportunity for three different arts organizations to create something fresh and engaging,” said Langs, who, working with Aidan Lang and Seattle Opera Dramaturg Jonathan Dean, will make these English-language performances faithful to Shakespeare. “It’s a beautiful story in an epic setting at a time when the world needs a bittersweet romance and joy.”

In the role of Beatrice, Daniela Mack makes her company debut, sharing the role with Hanna Hipp. Alek Shrader and Andrew Owens return to sing Benedict. The performance also includes Laura Tatulescu (Hero), Avery Amereau (Ursule), Kevin Burdette (Somarone), Craig Verm (Claudio) and Daniel Sumegi (Don Pedro).

The mainstage season concludes with Verdi’s magnificent Aida. Acclaimed creative team Francesca Zambello and Michael Yeargan oversee a visually imposing production with hieroglyphic projections by noted graffiti artist RETNA and evocative choreography by in-demand visionary Jessica Lang. This high-stakes love triangle between an Ethiopian princess, a military commander, and the Pharaoh’s formidable daughter includes performances by Leah Crocetto in her company debut as Aida—a role shared with Alexandra LoBianco. Additional company debuts include Milijana Nikolic and Elena Gabouri as Amneris; as well as Brian Jagde and David Pomeroy as Radames. Returning artists include Gordon Hawkins, Alfred Walker (Amonasro); Daniel Sumegi (Ramfis); and Maestro John Fiore.

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., with Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.
*Prices include a $3-per-ticket facility fee and (in some locations) a preferred seating donation. Young professionals ages 21-39 who join BRAVO! and students under 18 save 50 percent on tickets.
Madame Butterfly
Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica
In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: August 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 2017

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 55 minutes with one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Premiere: Feb. 17, 1904, at Teatro alla Scala

Cast:
Cio-Cio-San Liana Haroutounian* (Aug. 5, 9, 13, & 18)
Alexia Voulgaridou* (Aug. 6, 12, 16, & 19)
Pinkerton Alexey Dolgov* (Aug. 5, 9, 13, & 18)
Dominick Chenes* (Aug. 6, 12, 16, & 19)
Sharpless Weston Hurt (All dates)
Suzuki Renée Rapier (All dates)

Director Kate Cherry*
Conductor Carlo Montanaro
Production Design Christina Smith*
Lighting Design Matt Scott*

* Company Debut

Production Sponsors: Tagney Jones Family Fund, Barbara Stephanus
The Barber of Seville
Music by Gioachino Rossini
Libretto by Cesare Sterbini
In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: October 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28, 2017

Approximate Running Time: 2 hour and 50 minutes with one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Premiere: Feb. 20, 1816, at Teatro Argentina, Rome, Italy

Cast:
Rosina            Sofia Fomina* (Oct. 15, 18, 21, & 28)
Almaviva         Matthew Grills* (Oct. 14, 20, 22, & 25)
                  Andrew Owens (Oct. 15, 18, 21, & 28)
                  Will Liverman (Oct. 15, 18, 21, & 28)
Dr. Bartolo      Kevin Glavin (All dates)
Don Basilio       Daniel Sumegi (All dates)

Director         Lindy Hume
Conductor        Giacomo Sagripanti
Production Design Tracy Grant Lord*
Lighting Design  Matthew Marshall*

* Company Debut

Production Sponsor: Kreielsheimer Endowment Fund
**Così fan tutte**  
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte  
In Italian with English captions  

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall  
Performances: January 13, 14, 17, 20, 24, 26, 27, 2018  

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours, 15 minutes with one intermission  
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.  
Premiere: Jan. 26, 1790 in Vienna  

Cast:  
Fiordiligi  
Marina Costa-Jackson* (Jan. 13, 17, 24, & 27)  
Marjukka Tepponen* (Jan. 14, 20, & 26)  
Ferrando  
Ben Bliss* (Jan. 13, 17, 24, & 27)  
Tuomas Katajala* (Jan. 14, 20, & 26)  
Dorabella  
Ginger Costa-Jackson* (Jan. 13, 17, 24, & 27)  
Hanna Hipp (Jan. 14, 20, & 26)  
Guglielmo  
Craig Verm (Jan. 13, 17, 24, & 27)  
Michael Adams* (Jan. 14, 20, & 26)  
Despina  
Laura Tatulescu (All dates)  
Don Alfonso  
Kevin Burdette (All dates)  
Original Stage Director and Production Design  
Jonathan Miller  
Conductor  
Paul Daniel*  

* Company Debut  

**Production Sponsors:** Seattle Opera Foundation, ArtsFund
Beatrice & Benedict
Music by Hector Berlioz
Libretto by Berlioz and Shakespeare. Singing translation by Amanda Holden.
In English with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: February 24, 25, 28, March 3, 7, 9, 10, 2018

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes with one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Premiere: Aug. 9, 1862 at Theater der Stadt, Baden-Baden, Germany
Seattle Opera premiere

Cast:
Beatrice Daniela Mack* (Feb. 24, 28, Mar. 7, & 10)
                Hanna Hipp (Feb. 25, Mar. 3, & 9)
Benedict Alek Schrader (Feb. 24, 28, Mar. 7, & 10)
                Andrew Owens (Feb. 25, Mar. 3, & 9)
Hero Laura Tatulescu (All dates)
Ursule Avery Amereau* (All dates)
Somarone Kevin Burdette (All dates)
Claudio Craig Verm (All dates)
Don Pedro Daniel Sumegi (All dates)
Director John Langs*
Conductor Ludovic Morlot*

* Company Debut

Production Sponsors: Nesholm Family Foundation, Marks Family Foundation, City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
Aida
Music by Giuseppi Verdi
Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni
In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: May 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 2018

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours with one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Premiere: Dec. 24, 1871, Cairo, Opera House

Cast:
Aida                  Leah Crocetto* (May 5, 11, 13, 16, & 19)
                      Alexandra LoBianco (May 6, 9, & 12)
Amneris               Milijana Nikolic* (May 5, 11, 13, 16, & 19)
                      Elena Gabouri* (May 6, 9, & 12)
Radames               Brian Jagde* (May 5, 11, 13, 16, & 19)
                      David Pomeroy* (May 6, 9, & 12)
Amonasro              Gordon Hawkins (May 5, 11, 13, 16, & 19)
                      Alfred Walker (May 6, 9, & 12)
Ramfis                Daniel Sumegi (all dates)
Director              Francesca Zambello
Conductor             John Fiore
Scenic Concept        RETNA*
Set Design            Michael Yeargan
Costume Design        Anita Yavich*
Lighting Design       Mark McCullough
Choreographer         Jessica Lang*

* Company Debut

Production Sponsors: Lenore M. Hanauer, 4Culture

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About Seattle Opera
Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest with performances of the highest caliber and through innovative educational and engagement programs for all. Each year, more than 95,000 people attend Seattle Opera performances, and more than 400,000 people of all ages are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. By drawing our communities together, and by offering opera’s unique fusion of music and drama, we create life-enhancing experiences that speak deeply to people’s hearts and minds. Connect with Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and through the Seattle Opera channel on Classical King FM, 98.1.