Epic music rocks McCaw Hall in *Nabucco*

Seattle Opera’s new production brings audiences closer to the onstage action

August 8-22, 2015

SEATTLE – Come experience the power of music on a whole new level at the Seattle Opera premiere of Giuseppe Verdi’s *Nabucco* this August. Viewers will be visually transported to ancient Babylon through magnificent costumes, awe-inspiring projections, and a new staging configuration that brings the music and performers closer to the audience than ever before.

Before Verdi composed *Aida, La traviata,* and *Rigoletto,* some of the world’s most treasured operas, *Nabucco* was his first operatic masterpiece. In fact, *Nabucco*’s famous chorus, “Va, pensiero,” is so beloved in the composer’s native Italy, it’s become somewhat of an unofficial Italian anthem.

“*Nabucco* has everything that an audience looks for in an opera: a strong, uncompromising, almost Shakespearean drama told through music that’s thrilling and direct,” said General Director Aidan Lang. “It demands virtuoso singing from its protagonists, and we have lined up a stellar cast that will deliver the work to its full potential. Coupled with an innovative staging concept, we have all the ingredients for a truly compelling night in the theater.”
The opera tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar (or “Nabucco”), the mad king of Babylon who declares himself God. The powerful, fearsome Abigaille, daughter of one of his wives, feeds his ego in her own quest for power; meanwhile Nabucco’s own daughter, Fenena, resists her father and helps the enslaved Hebrews escape from bondage. In this powerful epic, Verdi uses an Old Testament story to give voice to a people yearning for freedom.

The star-studded cast includes bass-baritone Gordon Hawkins as Babylon’s unhinged ruler and soprano Mary Elizabeth Williams as the fierce Abigaille. Both of these celebrated artists wowed audiences in Porgy and Bess (2010), Hawkins as the title character and Williams as Serena, the performance for which she won the Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Award. Hawkins has starred in many Seattle Opera productions, including Il trovatore (2010) and the Ring (2009), and Williams most recently gave a passionate performance as the title character in Tosca (2015). Additionally, one of the opera world’s hottest rising stars, Jamie Barton, makes her Seattle Opera debut fresh off her win of the prestigious 2015 Richard Tucker Award.

Returning singers include tenor Russell Thomas. Most recently the title character in The Tales of Hoffmann (2014), Thomas will sing Ismaele, the Israelite whom Fenena loves. Weston Hurt, baritone, will sing Nabucco in the alternate cast. Hurt made his Seattle Opera debut as Germont in La traviata (2009) and returned to sing Ford in Falstaff (2010).

Also making company debuts are the two singers in the role of Zaccaria, the Hebrew High Priest: Christian Van Horn, bass-baritone, and Andreas Bauer, bass, (alternate cast). Soprano Raffaella Angeletti stars alongside Bauer in the alternate cast as Abigaille. Other featured singers include Jonathan Silvia (High Priest of Baal), Eric Neuville (Abdallo), and Karen Early Evans (Anna).

Nabucco premiers Saturday, August 8, and runs through Saturday, August 22. Running simultaneously with Verdi’s epic is the world premiere of An American Dream (August 21 and 23), which also explores themes of exile and belonging.

Tickets are available online at seattleopera.org or by calling 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619. Tickets may also be purchased at the Box Office by visiting 1020 John Street (two blocks west of Fairview), Monday to Friday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Ticket prices start at $25. Groups save 15 percent: 206.676.5588. Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 206.389.7676/800.426.1619. Online orders: seattleopera.org.

Follow #SONabucco on Twitter, Facebook and listen to excerpts of the opera on Soundcloud.

Production Sponsors: Seattle Opera Foundation and Kreielsheimer Endowment Fund.
Music by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Temistocle Solera
In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: August 8 - 22, 2015

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy, on March 9, 1842
Seattle Opera premiere

Cast:
Nabucco
Gordon Hawkins
Weston Hurt *

Abigaille
Mary Elizabeth Williams
Raffaella Angeletti † *

Zaccaria
Christian Van Horn †
Andreas Bauer † *

Fenena
Jamie Barton †

Ismaele
Russell Thomas

High Priest of Baal
Jonathan Silvia

Abdalio
Eric Neuville

Anna
Karen Early Evans

Conductor
Carlo Montanaro

Director
François Racine

Set Design
Robert Schaub and Seattle Opera technical staff

Video Design
Robert Bonniol, MODE Studios Principal Designer

Costume Design
Ginette Grenier †

Lighting Design
Duane Schuler

Hair & Makeup Design
Joyce Degenfelder

English Captions
Jonathan Dean

Sets and Costumes
Seattle Opera

† Seattle Opera Debut
* On August 9, 14, & 19

Nabucco/An American Dream
Free Public Previews
7/21/2015, noon, Freeland Library
7/21/2015, 2 p.m., Coupeville Library
7/24/2015, 2 p.m., Everett Library
7/26/2015, 2 p.m., Frye Museum
7/29/2015, 6:30 p.m., Edmonds Library
8/4/2015, 2 p.m., Queen Anne Library
8/4/2015, 7 p.m., Third Place Books
8/5/2015, 2 p.m., Ballard Library
8/6/2015, noon, Seattle Central Library

About Seattle Opera
Seattle Opera is a leading opera company, recognized both in the United States and around the world. The company is committed to advancing the cultural life in the Pacific Northwest with performances of the highest caliber, and through innovative education and community programs that take opera far beyond
the McCaw Hall stage. Each year, more than 95,000 people attend Seattle Opera performances and the company’s programs serve more than 400,000 people of all ages (including school performances, radio broadcasts and community engagement initiatives). Seattle Opera is especially known for its acclaimed works in the Richard Wagner canon, and has created an “international attraction” in its presentation of Wagner’s epic *Ring*, according to *The New York Times*. 