

SEATTLE OPERA.

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General Director Christina Scheppelmann to depart Seattle for Brussels' La Monnaie/De Munt in 2025

**Scheppelmann will complete five-year contract
at conclusion of 2023/24 season**

SEATTLE—Seattle Opera announced today that **General Director Christina Scheppelmann** has accepted a position as **General Director of La Monnaie/De Munt** in Brussels, Belgium, which she will begin at the conclusion of her five-year contract with Seattle Opera. The fourth General Director of Seattle Opera, Scheppelmann will complete her tenure after Seattle Opera's 2023/24 season. Under Scheppelmann's leadership, the company produced a world premiere, launched cornerstone programs, expanded its community partnerships, and brought over 100 new artists to Seattle for company debuts, with nearly 50 coming from abroad.

"Leading Seattle Opera is a tremendous opportunity," said Scheppelmann, who came to Seattle from the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona. "The company boasts an incredible staff, orchestra, chorus, and crew, as well as a wonderful, supportive audience, all of whom I will miss greatly. I love this city and the opera community in this region, which has welcomed me wholeheartedly. I could not pass up the opportunity to lead one of the great European opera companies while also being closer to my family. But for now, there is much work to do and more opera to come in the year ahead, and I look forward to sharing what we have in store."

La Monnaie/De Munt, the National Opera of Belgium, produces eight mainstage operas each season with an annual budget of more than \$60 million. The company, which includes a full-time orchestra and chorus, traces its roots back to the first public opera theater in Brussels in 1700, and has since become one of the most influential artistic institutions in Europe. Scheppelmann will succeed current General & Artistic Director **Peter de Caluwe**, who has held the position since 2007.

“Seattle Opera has been fortunate to collaborate with a general director of Christina’s caliber, and thanks to her leadership, the company is well positioned to build on its successes,” said **Board President Lesley Chapin Wyckoff**. “That Christina has accepted an offer to head one of Europe’s most important opera companies is a testament to her abilities and her excellent work in Seattle, which has ensured a bright, promising future for Seattle Opera. We could not be more proud of what she has accomplished here and we wish her the best in this exciting new opportunity.”

Scheppelmann’s tenure in Seattle advanced Seattle Opera’s position as one of the country’s most vital opera companies. Although the COVID-19 pandemic began mere months after her arrival, Seattle Opera thrived under Scheppelmann’s leadership. The company was one of only a few opera houses in the US to deliver the entirety of its 2020/21 season during the pandemic shutdown, which it did by creating innovative film versions of its previously announced lineup. During that period, Seattle Opera offered four complete opera films, hired more than twenty artists to present free online recitals, and expanded its educational programming through online classes, libretto-writing workshops, youth programs, and the Path with Art Veteran’s Choir. Seattle Opera also hosted community blood drives at the Opera Center throughout the pandemic in partnership with Bloodworks Northwest.

The company marked its return to live performance in August 2021 with its first outdoor concert, Richard Wagner’s *Die Walküre*. The event showcased international talent such as **Brandon Jovanovich**, **Angela Meade**, **Raymond Aceto**, **Eric Owens**, and **Alexandria LoBianco**. That performance inaugurated an impressive slate of over 100 Seattle Opera debuts, with nearly 50 international artists making their company debuts in the subsequent three seasons. Notable appearances have included Canadian conductor **Jordan de Souza** and the Argentinian creative team behind *Tristan and Isolde* in October 2022; Armenian soprano **Mané Galoyan**, South African soprano **Vuvu Mpofo**, and Korean tenor **Duke Kim** in 2023’s *La traviata*; Ukrainian mezzo-soprano **Olga Syniakova** and Russian conductor **Alevtina Ioffe** in 2022’s *The Marriage of Figaro*; Georgian soprano **Salome Jicia** in *The Elixir of Love* in August 2022; and American mezzo-soprano **J’Nai Bridges** and Korean tenor **Yonghoon Lee** in *Samson and Delilah in Concert* in January 2023.

Of all the debuts made during Scheppelmann's tenure, perhaps none was as significant as that of award-winning Afghan film director **Roya Sadat**, stage director for the world premiere of ***A Thousand Splendid Suns***, based on the novel by **Khaled Hosseini**. A resounding success, *Suns* was lauded for bringing "lyrical, beautiful music to a poignant tale on the McCaw Hall stage" (*The Seattle Times*). The production brought in more single-ticket buyers than any other contemporary opera in the company's history.

Seattle Opera has embraced contemporary opera during Scheppelmann's tenure, with offerings ranging from intimate chamber operas like Jerre Dye's ***The Falling and the Rising*** and Huang Ruo's ***Bound*** to the 2022 West-Coast premiere of Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's ***Blue***. The latter's "engrossing, challenging, and beautiful" (*NWTheatre*) tale of contemporary African American life captured the attention of the broader arts community in the Pacific Northwest.

Scheppelmann's commitment to community engagement has strengthened the company's belief that opera is for everyone. In October 2020, Seattle Opera launched its [Racial Equity and Social Impact plan](#), which aims to integrate anti-racism holistically into all aspects of Seattle Opera's work. As a result of those efforts, Seattle Opera staff now comprises 46% BIPOC individuals and significant strides have been made in casting diversity. New additions to the company's lineup of community programs, such as the [Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab](#) and the [Seattle Arts Fellowship](#), have focused on fostering new voices in opera.

Seattle Opera has continued to prioritize meaningful community partnerships through the isolating period of the pandemic and beyond. Partnering with more than 60 organizations and 45 public schools, the company strives to develop relationships that benefit our partners and the people they serve, while also expanding the art form's reach and accessibility in the region. Partnerships have driven new initiatives, including supply drives, free outdoor performances, and the company's first mainstage relaxed performance at *La traviata* in May 2023. The company welcomed over 2,000 people into the Opera Center for free public events during the 2022/23 season, with countless others attending school tours, outdoor performances, and opera classes.

Seattle Opera's Board of Trustees is committed to continuing to produce the highest-quality artistic experiences and programming with artists from around the world. The board invites the community to celebrate the achievements of Scheppelmann's tenure and looks forward to new artistic and programming opportunities that will grow opera audiences for the future.

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest through music, storytelling, and programs for people of all ages. Each year, more than 50,000 people attend the company's performances, and more than 100,000 people are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. The organization brings opera to life in a number of different ways, offering artistic excellence through national and international collaborations. Seattle Opera strives to create an environment where artists, staff, behind-the-scenes workers, and members of the community feel a strong connection to the company, and to the art of opera. Follow Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on Classical KING FM 98.1.

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