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**SEATTLE OPERA PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE OF DARON ARIC HAGEN'S *AMELIA* WITH LIBRETTO BY POET GARDNER MCFALL AND STORY BY STEPHEN WADSWORTH, MAY 8 TO 22, 2010, AT SEATTLE'S MCCAW HALL**

**Principal Casting Includes Kate Lindsey, Jane Eaglen, Nathan Gunn and William Burden**

**Grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, and the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences Support *Amelia***

March 11 – Seattle Opera presents a world premiere commission – *Amelia* – composed by Daron Aric Hagen, with libretto by poet Gardner McFall, and story by Stephen Wadsworth. The first opera commissioned by Speight Jenkins, *Amelia* will have eight performances May 8 through May 22 in McCaw Hall.

“Commissioning a new work is one of the most important responsibilities any leader in our field can undertake and I firmly believe we must renew our 400-year-old art form if it is to survive,” said Jenkins. “I waited a long time to commission an opera, and the experience of working with Daron, Gardner, and Stephen has been a fascinating journey. The glory of opera is the power of music to enrich words and I am honored to be the general director of the company that will bring this remarkable new work to life.”

An opera with music by **Daron Aric Hagen**, *Amelia* spans a 30-year period from 1966 to 1996, interweaving one woman's emotional journey, the American experience in Vietnam, and images of flight—the romance of flight and the moral dilemmas that arise when vehicles of flight are used for exploration, adventure, and war. Poet **Gardner McFall** has written an intensely personal libretto, with inspiration from her book of poems, *The Pilot's Daughter*, an elegy for her father, Commander A. Dodge McFall, who flew over 100 sorties in Vietnam and was lost in the Pacific. The story, developed by director **Stephen Wadsworth**, follows the protagonist, Amelia, as she deals conclusively with the loss of her father in the final days of her first pregnancy.

In addition to his role in creating the story, Stephen Wadsworth also serves as stage director and dramaturg. He heads an experienced and award-winning production team featuring scenic design by **Thomas Lynch**, who won an Eddy (Entertainment Design) Award for Seattle Opera's 2001 *Ring*; costumes by **Ann Hould-Ward**, who won a Tony for her work on *Beauty and the Beast*; and lighting design by **Duane Schuler**, who also lit the world premieres of John Harbison's *Great Gatsby* and Tan Dun's *First Emperor* at the Metropolitan Opera. Seattle Symphony Music Director Gerard Schwarz will conduct *Amelia*. Schwarz, conducting his orchestra, has recorded more American music than any other current music director in the United States.

Mezzo-soprano **Kate Lindsey**, who sang Nicklausse in the new production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the Metropolitan Opera (seen on movie screens worldwide), makes her Seattle Opera debut in the title role. Tenor **William Burden** creates the role of Dodge, Amelia's father. A Seattle Opera favorite and frequent participant in world premieres, **Burden** worked together with baritone **Nathan Gunn** in the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *American Tragedy*. **Gunn**, who also created roles in the world premieres of André Previn's *Brief Encounter*, Jonathan Dove's *Man on the Moon*, and Peter Eötvös's *Love and Other Demons*, alternates with baritone **David McFerrin** in the role of Paul, Amelia's husband. Soprano **Jane Eaglen**, known for her many Wagner roles all over the world and at Seattle Opera, creates the role of Helen, Amelia's aunt. Also returning to Seattle Opera are mezzo-soprano **Luretta Bybee**, who sings Amanda, Amelia's mother, and baritone **David Won**. Making their Seattle Opera debuts in supporting roles are some of America's hottest young talents, including sopranos **Jennifer**

**Zetlan, Ashley Emerson, and Karen Vuong; tenor Nicholas Coppolo; baritone Museop Kim; and bass Jordan Bisch.**

### *Amelia's Creative Team*

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Composer **Daron Aric Hagen** has created commissioned works for the New York Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony, National Symphony, Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festivals, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the King's Singers, and concerti for Gary Graffman, Jaime Laredo, Sharon Robinson and Jeffrey Khaner. He is also the composer of the operas *Shining Brow*, *Bandanna*, and *Vera of Las Vegas*, among others. He has over 200 art songs in print, as well as nearly two hundred works in every medium, including film. A graduate of Curtis and of The Juilliard School, he earns his living as a composer of concert music and opera. Active also as a conductor (*Bandanna*, under his baton, on Albany) and collaborative pianist (*Love in a Life, the Songs of Daron Hagen*, on Arsis), Hagen made his debut as stage director with the Buffalo Philharmonic in 2006; he will direct his operatic trilogy *New York Stories* for Kentucky Opera in October.

Poet and librettist **Gardner McFall's** first book of poems, *The Pilot's Daughter*, contains lyrics that move from the loss of her pilot father to the birth of her daughter by way of ambivalence and grief. It was these poems that captured the imagination of Daron Hagen and Speight Jenkins and led to the ideas and storyline at the center of *Amelia*. Though the opera is not a factual account of her life, the heart of her personal story lives in the words she has written. McFall's poems have appeared in such publications as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, *Southwest Review*, *The Nation*, *The Sewanee Review*, and *The Paris Review*, among others. She has received a Discovery/*The Nation* award, and her work in *The Missouri Review* was awarded the Thomas McAfee prize for poetry. McFall is the author of two children's books; her second book of poems, *Russian Tortoise*, was published in June 2009 by Time Being Books. She is the editor of May Swenson's prose miscellany, *Made with Words*, and recently wrote the introduction and notes for a new edition of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. McFall received her M.A. from The Johns Hopkins University and her Ph.D. from New York University. She currently teaches in the English department of Hunter College in New York City.

**Stephen Wadsworth** has a 25-year association with Seattle Opera beginning with Janáček's *Jenůfa* (1985) and continuing with Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Handel's *Xerxes*, and Wagner's *Lohengrin*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and the complete *Ring* (in 2001, 2005, 2009, and returning in 2013). A legendary theater and opera director, Wadsworth has directed productions for the Metropolitan Opera (*Rodelinda*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*), Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera Covent Garden, Vienna Staatsoper, Nederlandse Opera, Edinburgh Festival, and in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, and Santa Fe. Wadsworth recently directed the world premiere of Anna Deavere Smith's *Let Me Down Easy*, Terrence McNally's *Master Class* with Tyne Daly at the Kennedy Center, Verdi's *Falstaff* and Handel's *Ariodante* at The Juilliard School, and his own translation of Molière's *Don Juan* at the Old Globe in San Diego, the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C., the McCarter in Princeton and the Seattle Repertory Theatre. His productions of plays by Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Molière, Marivaux, Goldoni, Shaw, Wilde, and Coward—a number of which played at Seattle Repertory Theatre—have established him as a master of the classical repertoire. Wadsworth wrote the opera *A Quiet Place* with Leonard Bernstein, served as dramaturg and director for the world premieres of Daron Aric Hagen's *Shining Brow* and Peter Lieberon's *Ashoka's Dream*, and has translated and adapted a number of works for the stage, including operas by Monteverdi, Handel, and Mozart and plays by Molière, Marivaux, and Goldoni. He was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for his work on Molière and Marivaux, is an Artist-in-Residence at the Aspen Institute, the James S. Marcus Faculty Fellow and Director of Opera Studies at The Juilliard School, and Head of Dramatic Studies at the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artists Development Program.

### **Support for *Amelia***

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Seattle Opera has received a \$500,000 grant from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** in support of *Amelia*. This grant will provide support for the new opera, underwriting the costs for two additional American opera companies to present *Amelia* in the next few years. Presenting new works poses a substantial risk during challenging economic times, but this Mellon grant will help establish *Amelia* as an important addition to American opera. "If there had not been a second performance of *The Barber of Seville*, *La Traviata*, or *Madama Butterfly*, these works might not be as well known as they are today," said Jenkins. "Seattle Opera has often presented

additional performances of new works and this grant from The Mellon Foundation virtually assures *Amelia* of additional performances, laying a terrific foundation for future grants and serving the opera art form immeasurably.” More information on the grant can be found at [www.seattleopera.org/\\_downloads/press/releases/MellonGrant\\_final.pdf](http://www.seattleopera.org/_downloads/press/releases/MellonGrant_final.pdf).

Seattle Opera is fortunate to have the **Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences** as a production sponsor for *Amelia*. The fund has encouraged this significant new work with a \$300,000 grant in support of its mission “Access to Excellence.” “It’s important that we continue to encourage the development of new operas to draw new audiences and to provide access to the excellence of the operatic art form,” said Susan Hutchison, Executive Director of the Simonyi Fund. Additional support for *Amelia* comes from the **Lundgren Endowment for New Works, 4Culture**, the **Paul G. Allen Family Foundation**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

The world premiere of *Amelia* falls during the second year of Seattle Opera’s \$750,000 **Wallace Foundation** Excellence Award Grant, which spans four years and seeks to build new communities through the use of technology. The current year of the grant focuses on “Community Connections Through Technology,” and will support many of the ancillary events planned throughout the community. Seattle Opera is collaborating with local organizations The Museum of Flight, Barnes & Noble, and the Richard Hugo House to create events in which technology will forge connections between communities. The public is invited to join the company at discussions and panels across the Seattle area, including conversations with the creative team of *Amelia* and panels with Vietnam War veterans. All of these events will be streamed live at [www.livestream.com/seattleopera](http://www.livestream.com/seattleopera), where viewers can watch the discussions and submit questions in real time. Also, online at [www.seattleopera.org/amelia](http://www.seattleopera.org/amelia), Seattle Opera is posting a series of short videos exploring the creation of *Amelia*, including interviews with the cast and creative team, as well as audio excerpts recorded at workshops of the opera. And go to [www.seattleopera.org/spotlights](http://www.seattleopera.org/spotlights) for an online educational guide exploring *Amelia*.

*Amelia* opens on May 8 and runs through May 22. Single tickets start at \$25 and are available online at [seattleopera.org](http://seattleopera.org), by calling 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619, or by mobile phone at [mobile.seattleopera.org](http://mobile.seattleopera.org).

*Please note: the following artists list for Amelia replaces all previously published or announced cast lists. Further information on the 2009/10 season and full biographies of the cast members can be found at [seattleopera.org](http://seattleopera.org).*

## ***Amelia***

Music by Daron Aric Hagen

Libretto by Gardner McFall

Story by Stephen Wadsworth

In English with English Captions

Commissioned by Seattle Opera, under the leadership of General Director Speight Jenkins

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

8 Performances: May 8, 9m, 12, 15, 16m, 19, 21, and 22, 2010.

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours 30 minutes, including 1 intermission

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m.; matinees begin at 2:00 p.m.

### World Premiere Production

#### Artists

Amelia:	Kate Lindsey <sup>†</sup>
Dodge:	William Burden
Amanda:	Luretta Bybee
Paul:	Nathan Gunn/David McFerrin <sup>†*</sup>
The Flier:	Jennifer Zetlan <sup>†</sup>
Icarus/Young Boy:	Nicholas Coppolo <sup>†</sup>
Daedalus/Young Boy's Father:	Jordan Bisch <sup>†</sup>
Helen:	Jane Eaglen
Young Amelia:	Ashley Emerson <sup>†</sup>
Trang/Nurse:	Karen Vuong <sup>†</sup>
Huy/Doctor:	David Won
Interpreter/2 <sup>nd</sup> Doctor:	Museop Kim <sup>†</sup>

Conductor:	Gerard Schwarz
Stage Director:	Stephen Wadsworth
Set Designer:	Thomas Lynch
Costume Designer:	Ann Hould-Ward <sup>†</sup>
Lighting Designer:	Duane Schuler
English Captions:	Jonathan Dean

Sets and Costumes: Seattle Opera

<sup>†</sup>Company debut

\*On May 9 and 16 only

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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 fifty states.