



For Immediate Release



Seattle Opera Singer Archie Drake

Dies at 81

Over a period of 39 seasons, Drake sang more than 1,000 performances

At Seattle Opera and Was Still Going Strong

Seattle—Archie Drake, one of the most well-known and well-liked opera singers in the Pacific Northwest, died Wednesday evening, May 24, 2006, at age 81, at Harborview Hospital. Drake, who sang in the Saturday night performance of Seattle Opera's *Macbeth*, suffered a massive coronary Sunday morning. He never regained consciousness.

In 39 seasons at Seattle Opera, the bass-baritone—known throughout the region simply as “Archie”—sang 109 different roles and appeared in more than 1,000 performances.

In celebrating “Archie’s” eightieth birthday last season, Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins referred to the bass-baritone as “the soul of Seattle Opera—with the amazing longevity of his voice and his enormous stage presence, the variety of his accomplishments cannot be equaled by anyone else in his voice category.”

In hearing of Drake’s death, Jenkins said, “I have never known a man for whom I had more respect than Archie Drake. His work, his life, his whole being was concerned with giving. The world is a poorer place without him.” (Jenkins, currently in Europe, has begun planning a memorial for Archie.)

Seattle Opera Administrative Director Kelly Tweeddale said in her announcement to Seattle Opera’s staff:

Archie had a special relationship with Seattle Opera, singing with the company every season since his Seattle Opera debut in 1968 and appearing in more than 100 roles....He had a fierce dedication to his art, was committed to passing his knowledge and skills to the

younger generation of singers via his involvement in Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program, and will be remembered for his wry wit and warm heart.

During his early years with the company, Archie appeared in almost every opera staged in Seattle, and he traveled throughout Washington State to perform opera in countless schools and community halls. Archie had been a regular participant in the Seattle Opera's educational programs since the 1960s, touring Washington State in various productions including, in 1970, an original opera called *Penelope*. In more recent years, he appeared in several Young Artists Program operas; during the March 2005 rehearsals of the production of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, in which he sang Antonio the gardener, the eighty-year-old singer danced the fandango for the first time in his long career.

This English-born singer's mainstage roles at Seattle Opera included Candy in the 1970 world premiere of Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*, Wotan in Wagner's *Walküre* in 1973, Gunther in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* from 1975 to 1983 (nine productions), and three roles in Prokofiev's *War and Peace* in 1990. In the 21st century, he sang for Seattle Opera: Mitiukha in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Ambrogio in Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, the Sacristan and Jailer in Puccini's *Tosca*, the Imperial Commissioner in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, A Cappadocian in Richard Strauss's *Salome*, the Notary in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, the Second Prisoner in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Jed in Marvin David Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Luther in Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann*, and the Doctor in Verdi's *Macbeth* (a complete list of performances can be found below).

Born in 1925, Archie left his home in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England, at the age of 15 to follow the family tradition of seafaring (his family descended from a brother of Sir Francis Drake and founded Great Yarmouth's Drake Stevedoring Company). A deckhand in the merchant navy, he served in World War II in the Mediterranean, North Atlantic, and North Sea. In December 1946, Archie attended the nautical academy in Newcastle and then joined a major shipping line as a merchant marine.



In the 1950s, while working onshore as an Assistant Cargo, Archie joined a choir in Vancouver, Canada, and was encouraged to take voice lessons. Friends recommended him to Lotte Lehmann at the Music Academy of the West. Encouraged by Lehmann, he began to audition and eventually joined the Roger Wagner Chorale, once again traveling around the world, this time on cultural exchange programs for the U.S. State Department, and singing in more than 500 performances.

In 1968, Archie made his San Francisco Opera debut as Rambaldo in Puccini's *Rondine*. In the same year, he received a call from Seattle Opera General Director Glynn Ross to appear in the 1968 production of *Fidelio*, in which he sang Don Ferrando (in German) and Rocco (in English). The following year, Ross offered Archie a contract as a permanent member of the company.

In the early days, Archie performed in both the original language and English language performances of the operas. Sometimes, he sang different roles on different nights, moving from one language to the other. He created Candy for the world premiere of Floyd’s *Of Mice and Men*, a role that he repeated at Houston and Reno. (He sang regularly at other companies, including San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Portland Opera, and Arizona Opera.)

In a 2001 interview for *Seattle Opera Magazine*, Archie told Seattle Opera Education Associate Jonathan Dean, “For me, opera is basically an exploration of the human spirit, and it can take you further into emotions and feelings and concepts and understandings and divining than any other way.”

Archie is survived by niece Lorraine Saunders and nephews Robin Adams, Douglas “Barney” Adams, Brian Adams and Chris Adams of the U.K.

Seattle Opera is planning a celebratory memorial for Archie, tentatively scheduled for late June.



Archie Drake as Candy at Seattle Opera.

Archie Drake’s Performances at Seattle Opera

Operas (Mainstage only)	Characters Sung by Archie Drake	Month/Year
<i>Fidelio</i>	Don Fernando: International (German) Rocco: National (English)	Feb/March 1968
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Frank, prison warden: International	September 1969
<i>Turandot</i>	Mandarin: International Timur: National	Oct/Nov 1969
<i>Of Mice and Men</i> (premiere)	Candy: International George: National	Jan/Feb 1970
<i>La forza del destino</i>	Marchese di Calatrava /Fra Melitone: International Padre Guardiano : National	March 1970
<i>Salome</i>	1st Nazarene	May 1970
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Bonze/Yamadori: International Sharpless: National	Sept/Oct 1970
<i>Les contes d’Hoffmann</i>	Hermann: International	November 1970
<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	Coppelius/Schlemil/Crespel: National Dr. Bartolo: International	January 1971

	Figaro: National	
<i>Don Carlo</i>	Friar: International	March 1971
<i>Carmen</i>	Philip II: National	April/May 1971
<i>La bohème</i>	Zuniga	September 1971
	Benoit/Alcindoro: International	
	Colline: National	
<i>Un ballo in maschera</i>	Count Horn (Samuel)	November 1971
<i>The Flying Dutchman</i>	Dutchman: National	January 1972
<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Raimondo	April/May 1972
<i>La Perichole</i>	Don Pedro	Sept/Oct 1972
<i>Faust</i>	Wagner: International	November 1972
	Méphistophélès: National	
<i>Manon Lescaut</i>	Geronte de Ravoir	Jan/Feb 1973
<i>Die Walküre</i>	Wotan	March 1973
<i>La traviata</i>	Dr. Grenvil	May 1973
<i>La fille du régiment</i>	Sulpice	September 1973
<i>Rigoletto</i>	Sparafucile: National	November 1973
<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Don Alfonso	Jan/Feb 1974
<i>Siegfried</i>	The Wanderer	March 1974
<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	Simone	May 1974
<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	Dr. Bartolo: National	Oct/Nov 1974
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	Jan/Feb 1975
<i>Il trovatore</i>	Ferrando	May 1975
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July 1975
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	Police Commissioner	September 1975
<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Gremin: National	Oct/Nov 1975
<i>The Seagull</i>	Sorin	Jan/Feb 1976
<i>Aida</i>	Ramfis	March 1976
<i>Thaïs</i>	Palemon	May 1976
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July 1976
<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	Candy	September 1976
<i>Werther</i>	Bailiff	November 1976
<i>Otello</i>	Montano	January 1977
<i>La Cenerentola</i>	Alidoro: National	March 1977
<i>Tosca</i>	Sacristan	May 1977
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July 1977
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Bonze	September 1977
<i>La roi de Lahore</i>	Indra: National	Oct/Nov 1977
<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Varlaam	Jan/Feb 1978
<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Speaker/Second Armed Man	March 1978
<i>Falstaff</i>	Pistola: National	May 1978
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July 1978
<i>Norma</i>	Oroveso: National	September 1978
<i>Carmen</i>	Zuniga	November 1978
<i>Macbeth</i>	Banquo	January 1979
<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Commendatore: International	March 1979
	Leporello: National	
<i>La bohème</i>	Alcindoro: International	May 1979
	Benoit: National	
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July 1979
<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Raimondo	September 1979
<i>Faust</i>	Wagner: International	November 1979
	Méphistophélès: National	
<i>The Queen of Spades</i>	Sourin	Jan/Feb 1980
<i>Fidelio</i>	Rocco: National	March 1980
<i>La traviata</i>	Doctor Grenville	May 1980
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July 1980
<i>Les contes d'Hoffmann</i>	Crespel	September 1980

<i>Aida</i>	King	November 1980
<i>Manon Lescaut</i>	Geronte de Ravoire	January 1981
<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	King Marke	March 1981
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	Don Pasquale: National	May 1981
<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	King Marke	July 1981
<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Frank	Sept/Oct 1981
<i>Turandot</i>	Timur: National	Oct/Nov. 1981
<i>Rigoletto</i>	Count Monterone	January 1982
<i>Abduction from the Seraglio</i>	Pasha Selim: National	March 1982
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Bonze/Prince Yamadori	May 1982
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July/August 1982
<i>Il trovatore</i>	Ferrando: National	Sept/Oct. 1982
<i>Carmen</i>	Zuniga	November 1982
<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	Dr. Bartolo: National	January 1983
<i>The Girl of the Golden West</i>	José Castro/Billy Jackrabbit	March 1983
<i>Peter Grimes</i>	Captain Balstrode	May 1983
<i>Götterdämmerung</i>	Gunther	July/Aug. 1983
<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	Antonio	Sept/Oct. 1983
<i>La forza del destino</i>	Fra Melitone	January 1984
<i>Elektra</i>	Old Slave	March 1984
<i>The Ballad of Baby Doe</i>	Jacob	September 1984
<i>La bohème</i>	Benoit /Alcindoro	March 1985
<i>Jeno 'fa</i>	Mayor	May 1985
<i>Manon</i>	Innkeeper	September 1985
<i>Salome</i>	First soldier	March 1986
<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Zaretsky/Captain	May 1986
<i>Tosca</i>	Sciarrone	September 1986
<i>Otello</i>	Herald	Feb/March 1987
<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	The Speaker	Oct/Nov. 1987
<i>Rigoletto</i>	Count Ceprano	March 1988
<i>Romeo et Juliette</i>	Duke of Verona	Oct/Nov 1988
<i>Werther</i>	Bailiff	Feb/March 1989
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Commissioner	April/May 1989
<i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i>	Hans Foltz	August 1989
<i>Dialogues des Carmelites</i>	Thierry/Officer	January 1990
<i>Les contes d'Hoffmann</i>	Luther/Crespel	April/May 1990
<i>War and Peace</i>	Old Prince	July/August 1990
	Nicolai Bolkonski/General Yermolov/third madman	
<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	Simone	Sept/Oct 1990
<i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i>	A Lackey	January 1991
<i>La bohème</i>	Benoit/Alcindoro	Sept/Oct 1991
<i>The Ballad of Baby Doe</i>	Jacob	January 1992
<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	Ambrogio	September 1992
<i>The Passion of Jonathan Wade</i>	Rector	Oct/Nov 1992
<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>	A Physician	March 1993
<i>The Merry Widow</i>	Njegus	April/May 1993
<i>Tosca</i>	Sacristan	September 1993
<i>Lohengrin</i>	A Noble	July/August 1994
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Registrar	January 1995
<i>Carmen</i>	Lillas Pastia/Guide	Oct/Nov 1995
<i>Elektra</i>	Old Servant	March 1996
<i>Andrea Chénier</i>	Fouquier-Tinville/Schmidt	April/May 1996
<i>La traviata</i>	Grenvil	July/August 1996
<i>Turandot</i>	Emperor Altoum	Oct/Nov 1996
<i>Werther</i>	Bailiff	January 1997
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	Notary	August 1997
<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	Antonio	Oct/Nov 1997

<i>La bohème</i>	Benoit/Alcindoro	May 1998
<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	Steersman	August 1998
<i>Vanessa</i>	Nicholas	Feb/March 1999
<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Second Priest	October 1999
<i>Boris Godunov</i>	Mitiukha	January 2000
<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	Ambrogio	May 2000
<i>Tosca</i>	Sacristan/Jailer	Feb/March 2001
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Imperial Commissioner	January 2002
<i>Salome</i>	Cappadocian	March/April 2002
<i>Don Pasquale</i>	A Notary	January 2003
<i>Fidelio</i>	Second Prisoner	May 2003
<i>Mourning Becomes Electra</i>	Jed	October 2003
<i>Les contes d'Hoffmann</i>	Luther	May 2005
<i>Macbeth</i>	The Doctor	May 2006

Founded in 1963, Seattle Opera has developed into 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.

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Photo credits:

Page 1: Archie Drake in Verdi's *Macbeth*. Courtesy Bruce Tom, 2006.

Page 2: Archie Drake in the Navy. Courtesy Archie Drake

Page 6: Archie Drake as Candy. Courtesy Seattle Opera Archives