

SEATTLE OPERA

SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Seattle Opera Announces Finalists for 2014 International Wagner Competition

**Nine Singers to Compete for \$60,000 in Prizes
at 7:00 p.m. on August 7, 2014 at McCaw Hall**

Seattle—General Director Speight Jenkins announced the singers selected for Seattle Opera's popular International Wagner Competition on August 7, 2014, where emerging artists will go head-to-head *American Idol* style.

The competition is part of a celebratory weekend which also includes a concert and dinner in honor of Speight Jenkins' three decades at the helm of Seattle Opera (and featuring 15 of the company's favorite singers) on August 9.

In an all-Wagner concert conducted by Sebastian Lang-Lessing, who has extensive experience with Deutsche Oper Berlin, eight finalists and two alternates will compete for two prizes of \$25,000, to be awarded by a distinguished panel of judges. The audience and orchestra will also play an important role in the competition. Both groups will award a prize of \$5,000 to their favorite artist.

Singers, all between the ages of 25-40, were nominated by general directors, managers, and other established opera professionals. Following auditions in Munich, London, New York, and Seattle in the fall of 2013, eight finalists were chosen to compete. This third International Wagner Competition is made possible by a generous contribution from the Nesholm Family Foundation.

The competitors are:

David Danholt, tenor

Helena Dix, soprano

Ric Furman, tenor

Suzanne Hendrix, mezzo-soprano

Roman Ialcic, bass baritone

Tamara Mancini, soprano

Kevin Ray, tenor

Issachah Savage, tenor

Marcy Stonikas, soprano

The judges for Seattle Opera's third International Wagner Competition are an international group of authorities in all aspects of opera production—mezzo soprano **Stephanie Blythe**, who has spent five summers in Seattle singing Wagner's *Ring*; **Peter Kazaras** stage director, tenor, and Director of Opera Studies at UCLA; **Bernd Loebe**, the Director of Opera Frankfurt; **François Rochaix**, director of Seattle Opera's *Ring* from 1985 to 1995; and **Stephen Wadsworth**, director of Seattle Opera's *Ring* from 2000 to 2013 and Director of Opera Studies for the Juilliard School.

"Our auditions turned up ten remarkable young Wagnerians," said Seattle Opera's General Director Speight Jenkins. "They will make our third International Wagner Competition a thrilling and rewarding event. We have in Sebastian Lang-Lessing an exciting new conductor for Seattle Opera. I look forward to hearing the competition and to the decisions made by our distinguished panel of judges."

The first International Wagner Competition was held in August 2006 and made possible by a grant from the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences. Mr. Jenkins created the competition to identify and recognize qualified, emerging opera singers who demonstrate clear promise of an important career in the Wagnerian repertoire. Irish soprano Miriam Murphy and English baritone James Rutherford won the competition in 2006. South African soprano Elza van den Heever and Swedish tenor Michael Weinius won the second International Wagner Competition in 2008. Since then, these four prize-winners, plus many of the other competitors, have gone on to significant artistic accomplishments at opera houses around the world.

Beginning with its first presentation of the *Ring* in 1975, Seattle Opera has built an international reputation as the leading presenter of the Wagner repertoire in the United States. This Wagner tradition began under the leadership of the company's founding general director, Glynn Ross, and has been expanded under Speight Jenkins. During Mr. Jenkins's tenure, Seattle Opera has completed the formidable artistic feat of producing all ten of Wagner's major operas—including two very different productions of Wagner's *Ring*—which have been accompanied by seminars and symposia featuring leading opera scholars from the world over. By taking a leading role in discovering and promoting outstanding young singers with a desire to carve out a career that includes the Wagner repertoire, Seattle Opera is extending its ongoing commitment to the music of Richard Wagner.

International Wagner Competition

7:00 p.m., Thursday, August 7, 2014

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Seattle, Washington

Tickets start at \$46

Lead Sponsor – Nesholm Family Foundation

Honorary Co-Chairs & First Prize Sponsor – Charles and Lisa Simonyi
First Prize Sponsor – Anonymous, in honor of Speight Jenkins
Audience Choice Prize Sponsor – Wagner and More
Orchestra Choice Prize Sponsor – Betty and Jack Schafer

“Seattle Opera has brought our family its most satisfying artistic experiences,” say John and Laurel Nesholm. “We are thrilled to fund its third International Wagner Competition, which we expect will provide a springboard for several important careers. We look forward to great things from these emerging artists, and are excited that this tradition will continue.”

Tickets (ranging from \$46 to \$66) for the 2014 International Wagner Competition are available online, by phone or in person. For more information, call 800.426.1619 or 206.389.7676 or visit www.seattleopera.org.

2014 International Wagner Competition Finalists

Ric Furman

Tenor

Hometown: Macomb, IL

Ric Furman made his Seattle Opera debut as Florestan in *Fidelio* in 2012 and returned to sing Froh in Seattle’s 2013 *Ring*. He has performed Tito in *La clemenza di Tito* at Opera Company of Brooklyn, Don José in *Carmen* at Springfield Regional Opera, Dancaïre in *Carmen* at Cincinnati Opera, and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* at Pittsburgh Opera. For Cincinnati Opera he sang Augustin Moser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. He has also appeared at Dayton Opera, Dicapo Opera, Indianapolis Opera, and Opera Omaha. Past roles include Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Alfredo in *La traviata*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, both Roméo and Tybalt in *Roméo et Juliette*, Detlef in *The Student Prince*, Beppe in *Pagliacci*, and roles in *Aida*, *Don Carlo*, *Ainadamar*, *Salome*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Il viaggio a Reims*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Tender Land*, and *Die Zauberflöte*.

Musical selections: “Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater” & “In fernem Land”

Helena Dix

Soprano

Hometown: Melbourne, Australia

Australian-born Helena Dix won the London Wagner Society’s 2012 Bursary Competition and performed in the 2012 Bayreuth Stipendiatenkonzert at the Festspielhaus and as part of the International Wagner prize in Karlsruhe. In 2005, Dix represented Australia in the 2005 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition. Her operatic repertoire includes Elettra in *Idomeneo* for Theater Lübeck; the title role in *La Gioconda* in Valladoliad; a Flowermaiden in *Parsifal* for English National Opera; Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* and Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* for Scottish Opera; Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* for The Opera Project. Other roles include the title role of *Thaïs*, Violetta in *La traviata*, and the title role in *Cristina Regina di Svezia* at Wexford Opera, which was recognized by the International Opera Awards as the Best Rediscovered Work. She will sing the role of Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* for Lübeck Opera this season.

Musical selections: “Der Männer Sippe” & Liebestod

Suzanne Hendrix**Mezzo-Soprano****Hometown: Charles City, IA**

Suzanne Hendrix made her Seattle Opera debut as Waltraute in *Die Walküre* in 2013. Other Wagner roles include Grimmerde in *Die Walküre* for Grand Théâtre de Genève, Schwertleite in *Die Walküre* at San Francisco Opera, and Mary in *Der fliegende Holländer* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City. She recently performed the Fortune Teller in *Arabella* at Santa Fe Opera; Baba in *The Medium* and Bianca in *The Rape of Lucretia* at Opera Memphis; and Hedwig in *William Tell* and Azucena in *Il trovatore* at Wichita Grand Opera. Other roles include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Ma in *The Tender Land*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, the Princess in *Suor Angelica*, and Florence Pike in *Albert Herring*. She is a former apprentice artist with Des Moines Metro Opera, Merola Opera Program, and the Santa Fe Opera. She won first prize in the 2012 George London Competition. Upcoming engagements include Mrs. Ott in *Susannah* at San Francisco Opera.

Musical selections: “Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater” & “In fernem Land”

Roman Ialci**Bass****Hometown: Chisinau, Moldova**

German bass Roman Ialci covered the roles of Fafner and Hunding for Seattle Opera’s 2013 *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. His roles include Konchak in *Prince Igor*, Boris in *Boris Godunov*, Gremin in *Eugene Onegin*, and Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra*. He also performed Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Open Air Opera Festival in Isny. In 2006, he reached the final round of Plácido Domingo’s Operalia, and since September 2007 has been engaged as a soloist at the St. Gallen Theater, Switzerland, where his roles have included Escamillo in *Carmen*, Cascada in *The Merry Widow*, Lamoral in *Arabella*, Tomski in *The Queen of Spades*, Talbot in *Giovanna d’Arco*, Marchese d’Obigny in *La traviata*, and Kaspar in *Der Freischütz*. This March he performed Abimélech in *Samson et Dalila* at Oper Köln. Upcoming engagements include Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in Wuppertal, Germany.

Musical selections: “Abendlich strahlt” & Hagen’s Watch

Tamara Mancini**Soprano****Hometown: Pottsville, PA**

Tamara Mancini made her Seattle Opera debut as Ortlinde in *Die Walküre* in 2013. A former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, she performed on San Francisco Opera’s mainstage as Freia in *Das Rheingold* and Helmwige in *Die Walküre*. In 2013 she made her Vancouver Opera debut in the title role in *Tosca*, and she recently performed the title role in *Turandot* at Royal Opera Stockholm; Palácio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City; and Teatro Comunale di Bologna. Other roles include Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera*, Leonora in *La forza del destino*, Maddalena di Coigny in *Andrea Chénier*, and Santuzza in *Cavalleria rusticana*. She has won the Giulio Gari Competition, the Licia Albanese Puccini Competition, and the Opera Index Competition.

Musical selections: Isolde’s Narrative and Curse & “Gerechter Gott”

Kevin Ray**Tenor****Hometown: West Point, NY**

Kevin Ray recently performed Don José in *Carmen* at Wolf Trap Opera, the Third SS Officer in *The Passenger* with Houston Grand Opera at the Lincoln Center Festival, the title role of *Peter Grimes* at Chautauqua Opera, and Don José at the Lyrique-en-Mer/Festival de Belle-Île. Next season, he will join the Seattle Youth Symphony for Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and Houston Grand Opera for Iain Bell's *A Christmas Carol*, Roderigo in *Otello*, and the First Armored Man/Second Priest in *Die Zauberflöte*. A recent graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, his performances there included Alfred in *Die Fledermaus*, Melot in *Tristan und Isolde*, and the Messenger in *Il trovatore*. Also a former Santa Fe Apprentice Artist, he sang the Second Clubman in Moravec's *The Letter* and the Poet in *The Last Savage*. He has performed with Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Musical selections: "Winterstürme" & "Siegmond heiß' ich"

Issachah Savage

Tenor

Hometown: Philadelphia, PA

Issachah Savage recently made his Tanglewood debut singing the finale to Act 2 of *Aida* with the Boston Symphony. Grand prize winner of the 2012 Marcello Giordani International Competition, Savage has received awards and career grants from the Wagner Societies of New York, Washington, D.C., and Northern California, and two first place prizes in the Liederkrantz Foundation competition. Savage has performed Radames in *Aida* at Opera North Carolina and Houston Grand Opera. He has also participated in the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera, the Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart Emerging Singers Program, Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, and ACMA's Wagner Theater program, where he performed scenes from *Die Walküre*, *Parsifal*, and *Samson et Dalila*. Next season, he makes his Metropolitan Opera debut as Don Riccardo in *Ernani*, covers Siegmund in *Die Walküre* at the Canadian Opera Company, and performs Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Orchestre national de Bordeaux.

Musical selections: "Amfortas! Die Wunde" & "Mein lieber Schwan"

Marcy Stonikas

Soprano

Hometown: Elmhurst, IL

During Seattle Opera's 2012/13 season, Marcy Stonikas debuted the title roles in productions of *Turandot* and *Fidelio*, and she returned to Seattle Opera in 2014 to sing Magda Sorel in *The Consul*. She recently performed the title role in *Salome* at Utah Opera, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Wolf Trap Opera Company, and the title role of *Tosca* at Opera Santa Barbara. This spring she sang Leonore at the Volksoper Vienna. Additionally, she will soon perform in concert with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. She is a winner of the 2013 George London Foundation Vocal Competition and First Prize winner in the Wagner Division of the 2013 Gerda Lissner Foundational Vocal Competition. A graduate of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program, Stonikas will return to Seattle Opera next season to sing the role of Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Musical selections: "Dich, teure Halle" & Senta's Ballad

David Danholt

Tenor

Hometown: Copenhagen, Denmark

Danish tenor David Danholt won the 2009 Reumert Talent Prize and was a finalist in the 2013 Wagner Society of England Competition. Last summer, he sang Claudio in *Das Liebesverbot* with Leipzig Opera in Bayreuth. He has since sung this role and Arindal in *Die Feen* in Leipzig. Other Wagner roles have included the Steersman in *Der fliegende Holländer* and the Young Seaman/Shepherd in *Tristan und Isolde* at Danish National Opera. He will sing Erik in *Der fliegende Holländer* for Florentine Opera Company in the fall. He has also sung Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Royal Danish Opera, the title role in *Idomeneo* for Grange Park Opera, Jeník in *The Bartered Bride* at the Staatstheater Mainz, and SS Officer in *The Passenger* at the Teatro Real, Madrid. He trained at the Royal Academy of the Royal Theatre, and then in the soloist class of the Royal Academy of Music, Copenhagen.

Musical selections: “Nur eine Waffe taugt” & the Prize Song

2014 International Wagner Competition Conductor

Sebastian Lang-Lessing began his tenure as Music Director of the San Antonio Symphony in 2010. In addition to making his Seattle Opera debut conducting the International Wagner Competition this year, his season includes the Dvořák Festival in San Antonio; joining Renée Fleming for a concert in Naples, Florida; and multiple conducting opportunities with Dallas Opera, the Belgrade Philharmonic, Tianjin Symphony and a tour by Teatro San Carlo in Naples to the Royal Opera House Muscat in Oman.

Lang-Lessing served as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra from 2004 to 2012. Earlier posts include positions with Hamburg State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Nancy Opera. He regularly appears on the podiums of the world's preeminent opera houses, including the Paris Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Colorado, Bordeaux Opera, Washington National Opera, Hamburg State Opera, and in Oslo and Stockholm. He also has a particularly close connection with Cape Town Opera. Among his recent opera engagements was a highly acclaimed new production of Wagner's *Rienzi* with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, featured on the DVD released by Unitel.

2014 International Wagner Competition Judges

Stephanie Blythe, one of the world's leading mezzo-sopranos, has sung Fricka and the Second Norn in all Seattle *Ring* performances since 2000. She added Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung* in 2009 and 2013. Other roles at Seattle Opera include the title role in *Carmen*, Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri*, Amneris in *Aida*, and Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*. She has performed at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera Covent Garden, and Opéra National de Paris, among others. Her many roles include Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera*; Azucena in *Il trovatore*; Ježibaba in *Rusalka*; Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice*; Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*; Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex*; Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*; Mère Marie in *Dialogues des Carmélites*; Eudige in *Rodelinda*; three roles: Frugola, La Zia Principessa, and Zita in *Il Trittico*; Auntie in *Peter Grimes*; and Ino/Juno in *Semele*. She has recently toured the US with the two programs *We'll Meet Again: The Songs of Kate Smith* and an All-American song program, which culminated in a Live From Lincoln Center broadcast on PBS and a recital in Carnegie Hall.

Stage director and tenor **Peter Kazaras** has a long history with Seattle Opera, as a singer and director for its mainstage and as the Artistic Director of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program. Before shifting his career to stage direction, he performed at houses all over the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and San Francisco Opera. At Seattle Opera he made his debut singing the role of Steva in *Jenůfa* in 1985, and went on to perform a wide range of roles including Tamino, Faust, Hoffmann, Edgardo in *Lucia*, Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, Pierre in *War and Peace*, Peter Quint and Captain Vere. His Seattle Opera directing credits include Bellini's *Norma*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Falstaff*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Madama Butterfly*. For the Young Artists Program, he has directed productions of *Don Giovanni*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *L'enfant et les sortilèges* & *Gianni Schicchi*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and many other operas. He has also directed for the Caramoor Festival, San Francisco Opera's Merola Program, the Cabrillo Festival, Madison Opera, Santa Fe Pro Musica, Eos, Hartt, the Academy of Vocal Arts, UCLA, and Chautauqua Institution. In 2007/08, became a professor at UCLA, where he serves as Director of Opera.

Bernd Loebe has been the director of the Frankfurt Opera since 2002. One year into his term, Frankfurt was voted "Opera House of the Year" in a poll of critics by the German magazine *Opernwelt*. This honor has happened several times since. During the 2008/09 season Frankfurt Opera founded the Opera Studio, a training program for emerging singers. In 2009 he was the Vice President of the German Academy of Performing Arts and in 2010 he was elected Chairman of the Deutsche Oper Conference. Before taking the helm in Frankfurt, he spent 11 years as Artistic Director at Brussels' Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. He has been a juror in many international singing competitions, including the New Voices competition in Gütersloh, Germany, the Moniuszko Vocal Competition in Warsaw, and the International Vocal Competition in Toulouse.

Swiss-born director **François Rochaix** founded the Atelier de Genève in 1963, and he served as general director of the Théâtre de Carouge in Switzerland, which he also founded, from 1975-1981 and 2002-2008. Rochaix made his opera debut staging Britten's *Turn of the Screw* for the Grand Théâtre de Genève, and his other opera credits include productions at the Scottish Opera, Opera North, the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Cleveland Opera, and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. Rochaix made his Seattle Opera debut in 1985 with a new production of Wagner's *Die Walküre* and returned the next year to stage the entire *Ring* cycle. He has returned several times since then, directing new productions of Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Aida*, Bizet's *Carmen*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and the 2003 production of *Parsifal* that opened Marion Oliver McCaw Hall. In 1999, Rochaix staged the massive Festival of the Winegrowers in Switzerland, which only occurs once every 25 years, and in 2001 he directed the opening ceremony of the Swiss National Exhibit. He also has served as the director of Harvard University's American Repertory Theatre/Moscow Art Theatre School Institute for Advanced Theatre Training. In 1991, Rochaix received the Reinhardt Ring, the highest theater award granted by the Swiss government.

Stephen Wadsworth has directed at the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera Covent Garden, Vienna Staatsoper, Nederlandse Opera, Edinburgh Festival, and in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, and Santa Fe. He made his Seattle Opera debut 29 years ago with *Jenůfa*, and has returned for the world premiere of Daron Hagen's *Amelia*, *Iphigénie en Tauride* (a co-production with the

Metropolitan Opera), *Orphée et Eurydice*, Handel's *Xerxes* (performed in Wadsworth's English translation), and Wagner's *Lohengrin*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and the *Ring*. He wrote the opera *A Quiet Place* with Leonard Bernstein, and directed the world premieres of Daron Hagen's *Shining Brow* and Peter Lieberson's *Ashoka's Dream*, as well as new plays by Beth Henley and Anna Deavere Smith. Wadsworth has staged much-traveled productions of plays by Shakespeare, Molière, Marivaux, Goldoni, Shaw, Wilde, and Coward. The French government named him a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for his work on Molière and Marivaux. Wadsworth is Head of Dramatic Studies at the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artists Development Program, and the James S. Marcus Faculty Fellow and Director of Opera Studies at the Juilliard School, where he has launched the first intensive acting program for opera singers.

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Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Seattle, Washington

For tickets and information, call 800-426-1619 or 206-389-7676 or visit www.seattleopera.org

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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 50 states.