

SEATTLE OPERA. THANKFUL



Seattle Opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, 2016 © Turffer

MAY 2016

Annual Fund
Impact Report



WHAT A YEAR!

As we near the end of Seattle Opera’s 2015/16 season, I reflect on what an amazing year we have had: from the innovative staging of *Nabucco* in August, through this month’s spellbinding production of *The Flying Dutchman*. On behalf of the Seattle Opera Board of Directors, I would like to thank each and every one of you for bringing such beauty and drama to our stage through your donations.

With \$2 million yet to be raised, we need your help in bringing our season to a close. Even though our stage will be dark until our Summer Fest on July 23, Seattle Opera is hard at work, bringing the magic of opera into our schools, rehearsing our Youth Opera Chorus for upcoming community performances, and preparing our brand new production of *The Wicked Adventures of Count Ory* for its August premiere.

The many facets of our work are all made possible with your support. I hope you will join me in making the close of this season a success.

Warmly,

Brian Marks
Chair, Development Committee
Seattle Opera Board of Directors

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: CAROL LEVIN, INSPIRED BY OPERA

Longtime donor and subscriber Carol Levin is an accomplished poet, a disciple of dance and yoga, and a passionate opera lover. She recently shared her perspective on Seattle Opera and how this art form influences and inspires her:

My husband and I were first introduced to opera by what we called our “opera fanatic” friends, who pointed their finger at us and said, “It is time you learned about opera.” They sat us down to listen to *Ariadne auf Naxos*, pointing out themes and discussing the story. Then we attended the opera, and eventually subscribed.

To me, opera is the ultimate art form: a collaboration and integration of all arts—music and singing, acting and dramaturgy, costumes and sets. It’s all alive on a single stage, at a single moment. **Opera can inspire audiences toward something they may never have thought of or experienced.** We have introduced many people to opera, and being with them as they begin to understand and get excited is exhilarating.

For about 20 years, I performed with Seattle Opera as a supernumerary [a non-speaking actor]. I was able to experience life on a different plane, standing surrounded by the chorus and on a stage alive with operatic drama. I then wrote a book of poems about these experiences: *Confident Music Would Fly Us to Paradise*, published in 2014. I dedicated the book to Seattle Opera for providing inspiration through such wonderful experiences over the years.





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OPERA GOES TO SCHOOL IN WENATCHEE

Our second annual residency in Wenatchee brought opera magic to over 1,000 students and community members this past March.

OPERA TIME

Teaching Artist Becca Cantrell, a music masters student at UW, worked with five area schools and led 550 children in kindergarten, first, and second grades in a delightful Opera Time program. Over the course of four days in 30-minute sessions, these students explored literature and musical storytelling through singing, dancing, and movement.

OUR EARTH

The final day in Wenatchee featured two performances of *Our Earth* at the Numerica Performing Arts Center. An audience of approximately 560 children attended an opera about the adventure of salmon siblings as they

journey back home—with appearances by the hungry Coyote, wise Raven, bossy Golden Eagle, and fisherman Tayil. The evening's special community performance featured local students in the chorus. Our Teaching Artist worked with this self-selected group after school to prepare them for the show.

Our partners in Wenatchee deserve a special thank you, including Sara Rolfs, a board member of the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, who helps to coordinate these visits each year; and Matt Cadman, Executive Director of the Numerica Performing Arts Center. With the support of the Seattle Opera donor family, we look forward to returning next year!

Opera Time is a 30-minute integrated storytelling program that fosters literacy through the arts. Working from carefully selected children's books, elementary students create memorable moments of musical drama.

Our Earth is a trilogy of operas, commissioned by Seattle Opera, that explores the heritage of the Pacific Northwest and the earth science curriculum. This year marks our final performances of the work. Next spring, we will introduce *Cinderella en España* to schools across Washington. This opera is a bilingual a story about the beauty of kindness and the ugliness of mistreatment, set in modern-day Barcelona, Spain.

GREER & LURETTA: THE ULTIMATE OPERATIC COUPLE

Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley and his wife, mezzo-soprano Luretta Bybee, joined Seattle Opera as featured artists for our gala this past April, in advance of their performances in *The Flying Dutchman* as The Dutchman and Mary. We caught up with Greer and Luretta to hear about their journey together and their relationship with Seattle Opera.



Luretta as Mary in *The Flying Dutchman*



Greer as The Dutchman in *The Flying Dutchman*

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING MARRIED TO A FELLOW ARTIST?

Luretta: We'll be married 29 years this summer, and we've spent lots of months apart, which gets more complicated when you have a kid. So we look for opportunities to perform together. I find it's great to be married to a fellow artist, someone who understands and does what I do.

WHAT DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO ABOUT *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*?

Greer: It's one of those roles that's a gift to sing. And the big part is that we're together—we're not actually protagonists that get to sing to each other, but we're actually doing the show together. It's also about being back in Seattle. Singing Wagner in Seattle is very special to me. It's the first place where I really ventured into this repertoire. I love Seattle, we both do.

Luretta: And the amazing, amazing colleagues! It's such a great group of people, right down to the very last one. The production staff are like our family. The audiences are phenomenal, supportive, and both of us have been coming for so long that we've made so many friends in the audience, among the artist aides and in the audience itself. That's the best.

Greer: Seattle is almost a second home for us, and it's been our artistic home for a long time now.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE YOUR GALA PERFORMANCE TO YOUR WORK IN *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*?

Luretta: For me, I feel a bit more naked [in my gala performance], because I don't have the pit between me and the audience, and I don't have the costume on. The spotlight is more on me as a

person, instead of my interpretation of the character. But it's also nice, because you can have real interaction with the people. And the people who come to the gala are the people who love the opera and Seattle Opera, so that makes it even better!

HOW DO OPERA DONORS AFFECT YOUR CAREER AND THE OVERALL OPERA EXPERIENCE?

Greer: Donors make it possible. They are the engine. And arts are the key to a civilized society. In this age, live performance connects us to each other on a human level, as opposed to sound bites from TV or, you know, living completely with our heads in our phones and iPads. It is a celebration of our group involvement in being here on this planet.

Luretta: Seattle Opera donors, and this board in particular, are so supportive. They're really interested in the art form. They care about getting to know us. They believe in what we do, and there's nothing that I appreciate more than that.



Luretta and Greer at the Gala on April 16, 2016.

SAVE THE DATE:

SUMMER FEST

Saturday, July 23, 2016
at McCaw Hall

Join us for a lively first look at what's in store for the 2016/17 season at this family-friendly, activity-filled celebration! Donors will enjoy access to a complimentary Hospitality Suite throughout the event.

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