

SEATTLE OPERA

SPEIGHT JENKINS GENERAL DIRECTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Seattle Opera Announces First Live Audio Recording: 2013 *Ring* Available for Pre-Order Now

Powerhouse Voices, Orchestra in High-definition

Seattle—Seattle Opera and AVIE Records announced today that they will release a live recording of Seattle Opera’s 2013 *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, available as a physical, 14-CD box set, digital download, and for online streaming. For forty years, Seattle Opera has built its international reputation on highly acclaimed live performances of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle; now, for the first time, the company is offering the *Ring* in another format.

Devotees from all 50 states and 22 countries flocked to Seattle last summer for the opportunity to hear Wagner’s most ambitious work performed by a cast carefully chosen by Seattle Opera General Director Speight Jenkins. According to *Opera News*, the 2013 *Ring* was “better than ever ... Asher Fisch’s conducting gave unprecedented musical strength; and German heldentenor Stefan Vinke’s Siegfried was outstanding, the best Seattle has experienced.”

Speight Jenkins explained the state-of-the-art technology that distinguishes this *Ring* recording: “Traditional microphones can compress or distort the huge voices required in Wagner operas. We were blessed in this project to use a remarkable, specially-calibrated custom microphone made available by Meyer Sound, one that captures dramatic voices as the theater audience hears them,” Jenkins said. “By every measure: voices, orchestra, drama, audience excitement, I truly feel that the 2013 production was the best *Ring* I produced in my 31 years with the company, so I’m thrilled that it will be preserved in this way.”

Evans Mirageas, Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera, produced the recording. Says Mirageas, “To have been asked to assist Speight Jenkins, the recording team and all the artists associated with Seattle Opera in this project is a dream come true. From my fervid teenage Wagnerian obsessive days of listening to the (then still new) Solti *Ring* on London/Decca, I have loved this Mount Everest of opera. While I never met the legendary Decca producer John Culshaw whose masterwork was the Solti recording, I was his successor at Decca as the head of artists and repertoire but one. I inherited from *his* protégé Ray Minshull the small brass dragon that was Culshaw’s talisman throughout the *Ring* recording years. I kept it nearby in this past year or recording and post-production. It has been a privilege and a joy to be a *happy* Nibelung in this enterprise.”

The recording features Seattle *Ring* veterans **Greer Grimsley** (Wotan); **Stephanie Blythe** (Fricka, Second Norn, and Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*); **Stuart Skelton** (Siegmund), **Margaret Jane Wray** (Sieglinde and Third Norn), **Richard Paul Fink** (Alberich) as well as newcomers **Alwyn Mellor** (Brünnhilde) and **Stefan Vinke**. **Asher Fisch**, named “among the finest *Ring* conductors of our time” by *Opus Magazine*, conducted the production.

The 14-CD box set of this live recording is available for pre-sale exclusively at <http://seattleopera.org/RingCD> starting June 25, and retails for \$150. Also included: a 54-page booklet featuring full-color production photos, essays, and artist biographies, as well as four separate libretti of the four operas in the original German with Stewart Spencer’s English translation. Pre-orders, which benefit Seattle Opera, will be shipped in August. The box set and digital versions will be released commercially on September 9. The iTunes release will be mastered for iTunes and offered as an interactive iTunes LP with bonus visuals and content provided when viewed on iTunes.

This *Ring* recording was made possible with the cooperation of Seattle Opera’s collective bargaining unions: American Guild of Musical Artists AFL-CIO; IATSE Local 15, 488 and 887; and the Seattle Symphony and Opera Players’ Organization, a chapter of the International Guild of Symphony, Opera, and Ballet Musicians. Seattle Opera would like to thank executive producers David J. and Linda A. Cornfield for their belief in this project. Recorded live at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, August 2013, by Matthew Sutton & Rick Fisher; edited, mixed and mastered at RFI Mastering by Matthew Sutton and Rick Fisher. The 2013 *Ring* was made

possible by the Valhalla Sponsor, Nesholm Family Foundation / John F. and Laurel Nesholm; the Festival Sponsor, Lufthansa; with additional support by the Carol Franc Buck Foundation.

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About Seattle Opera

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2014, Seattle Opera is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Founded in 1963, 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 41 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 five continents and 50 states.

About AVIE Records

Founded in London in 2002, AVIE Records operates a unique business model based on artist ownership. In its 12 years, the label has amassed a catalog of over 300 titles which are available in over 30 countries. AVIE enjoys collaborating with some of the world's most distinguished and decorated artists, as well as fostering the careers of today's most promising young musicians. AVIE's wide-ranging repertoire ranges from 9th-century Greek chant to world premiere recordings, encompassing solo, chamber, vocal, orchestral and operatic works. With numerous Gramophone Awards, Grammy nominations and other international accolades to its credit, the trail-blazing AVIE has been hailed as "adventurous" (New York Times) and "enterprising" (Gramophone), and operates from offices in the UK and the US.