

SEATTLE OPERA

PRESS RELEASE

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**Seattle Opera Announces 2015/16 Season:
*Nabucco, An American Dream, The Pearl Fishers, Mary Stuart,
The Marriage of Figaro and The Flying Dutchman***

Company Presents First Season of Aidan Lang's Vision

Year-Round Opera Returns in Seattle

SEATTLE—It's a new era at Seattle Opera. The company today announced its 2015/16 season, the first to be presented by General Director Aidan Lang, and a return to full-year programming with a total of six operas, including new productions and a world premiere. Under Lang's leadership, the company hopes to serve the community through the magic of theater and music in McCaw Hall, and in learning and engagement programs across the Pacific Northwest.

"We are excited to offer a season that is so varied, both in terms of repertoire and presentation style," Lang said. "In addition to a world premiere, we have in *Nabucco* and *Mary Stuart* two great, highly dramatic works that have never before been seen in Seattle. And it is especially pleasing to maintain our Wagnerian credentials with a compelling, new-to-Seattle production of *The Flying Dutchman*. I know our audiences are in for a thrilling ride."

The 2015/16 season includes two company premieres: *Nabucco* (Verdi) and *Mary Stuart* (Donizetti); a world premiere: *An American Dream* (composed by **Jack Perla** with libretto by **Jessica Murphy Moo**) conceived from the company's community storytelling initiative, the *Belonging(s) Project*; and new-to-the-company productions of *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart), *The Pearl Fishers* (Bizet) and *The Flying Dutchman* (Wagner). In addition to mainstage performances, programs that serve the community are at the heart of Lang's vision. In the 2015/16 season, Seattle Opera launches the *Flight* project, a multi-

year series of programs and events that includes the commission of a trilogy of new operas for family audiences and in-school performances. *Flight* is modeled on the three-year *Our Earth* project, which to-date has served 31,893 people in more than 158 performances.

The mainstage season kicks off in August 2015 with a new production of an opera that's never before been presented in Seattle: *Nabucco*, Verdi's first masterpiece. The power and grandeur of the Old Testament story will come alive with innovative staging designed to bring the audience right into the action and closer to the music, notably the famous chorus "Va, pensiero." **Gordon Hawkins** returns in Verdi's first great baritone role, the King of Babylon. **Mary Elizabeth Williams** takes on the challenge of his fearsome daughter, Abigaille. **Christian Van Horn** makes his Seattle debut as Zaccaria, the High Priest. **Russell Thomas** returns as Ismaele, and **Jamie Barton** makes her Seattle Opera debut as Fenena. Italian conductor **Carlo Montanaro** returns following Verdi's *Attila* (2012) and more recently, *The Consul* (2014). **François Racine**, who won Seattle Opera's Artist of the Year Award for directing the acclaimed Canadian Opera Company production of *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Erwartung* (2009), returns to direct a new production with sets by Seattle Opera's own **Robert Schaub** (*The Magic Flute*, 2011); projections by **Robert Bonniol**, MODE Studios; and costumes by **Ginette Grenier**.

Running concurrently with *Nabucco* in August is the world premiere of *An American Dream*—an opera based on real stories from the Pacific Northwest. The heartbreak of World War II binds strangers together after a Japanese American family is forcibly removed from where they live on an island in Puget Sound, and the new residents slowly piece together the history of their home. **Morgan Smith** (Seattle Opera Young Artists Program graduate) returns to create the role of Jim, an American soldier married to Eva, a German Jew who has fled the Nazis and moved to the Pacific Northwest. Making their Seattle Opera debuts are **D'Ana Lombard** as Eva and, as the Japanese American family, **Nina Yoshida Nelsen** (Hiroko Kimura), **Adam Lau** (Makoto Kimura), and **Hae Ji Chang** (Setsuko Kimura). Conductor **Judith Yan** makes her Seattle Opera debut. **Peter Kazaras**, longtime Seattle Opera director, singer and former head of the company's Young Artists Program, returns to direct following *The Consul*.

An American Dream is inspired by stories from Seattle Opera's *Belonging(s) Project* (seattleopera.org/belongings), a community storytelling initiative where participants were asked to consider: "If you had to leave your home today and couldn't return, what would you want to take with you? Why is that object, that memory, or that connection to your past so important?"

The simultaneous presentation of *An American Dream* with *Nabucco* is in itself a compelling artistic choice, and a deliberate pairing by the company's general director.

"Every now and then in life, things suddenly fall neatly into place; and so it was with *An American Dream*," Lang said. "The workshop process of *An American Dream* revealed an unexpected resonance with one of the key themes of *Nabucco*, which we had already planned. So we jumped at the opportunity to present the two works in parallel. In attending both operas, our audiences will inevitably have an even richer human experience than they would by seeing each piece in isolation."

Next, Bizet's hypnotic love story *The Pearl Fishers* heats up the fall. Internationally beloved designer **Zandra Rhodes** returns following her Artist of the Year Award costuming Seattle Opera's *The Magic Flute* (2011) to create a grand vision of exotic splendor and vibrant color with her sets and costumes. **Maureen McKay**, a Seattle Opera Young Artists Program graduate who has gone on to impressive achievements in Europe, makes her mainstage debut as the beautiful priestess Leïla. **John Tessier** and **Brett Polegato** return to sing the two men who love her, Nadir and Zurga. **Jonathan Lemalu** makes his Seattle Opera debut as Nourabad. Both stage director **Andrew Sinclair** and conductor **Emmanuel Joel-Hornak** make their Seattle Opera debuts.

During the holiday season, Seattle Opera's Education Department will deepen its collaborative partnership with Seattle Symphony. The Youth Opera Chorus will again perform with the symphony for its holiday concert on December 15, 2015 at Benaroya Hall. Additionally, the two companies are introducing a new pilot program: an in-school partnership between Opera Time (musical storytelling that fosters literacy for kindergarten-second grade) and Link Up: Seattle Symphony. Link Up allows third-fifth graders the opportunity to "join the orchestra" in a highly participatory program in which they learn to sing and play recorder in the classroom, and perform with the symphony from their seats.

Then, in the new year, Seattle Opera presents *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart's endlessly enjoyable comedy of manners. General Director **Aidan Lang** returns to stage directing to mount his own production, which *The New Zealand Herald* called "engrossing, astute and unmissable." Chinese bass-baritone **Shenyang** makes his Seattle Opera debut as Figaro, partnered by **Nuccia Focile** as Susanna. **Morgan Smith** returns as Count Almaviva, and **Bernarda Bobro** debuts as his forgiving wife. In the other cast, **Aubrey Allicock** as Figaro weds **Talise Trevigne** as Susanna. The ensemble also features **Arthur Woodley**, **Steven Cole**, **Karin Mushegain**, and Seattle Opera Young Artist alumni **Caitlin**

Lynch, Elizabeth Pojanowski, and Deborah Nansteel. Gary Thor Wedow returns following *Don Giovanni* (2014) to conduct.

A Seattle Opera premiere, *Mary Stuart* takes the stage next in February 2016. Based on Friedrich Schiller's brilliant play, *Mary Stuart* dramatizes the battle of titanic wills between Queen Elizabeth I of England and her Catholic cousin Mary Stuart Queen of Scotland. In extravagant period costumes, these two iconic royals clash in a haunting story of jealousy, pity, doubt, menace, exaltation and remorse.

Christine Rice and **Joyce El-Khoury** share the honors as Donizetti's doomed queen, with **Mary Elizabeth Williams** and **Keri Alkema** as Queen Elizabeth I, her hated rival. Baritones **Weston Hurt** and **Michael Todd Simpson** appear as the scheming courtiers Talbot and Cecil. **Carlo Montanaro** is at the podium and **Kevin Newbury** makes his Seattle Opera debut as director.

Finally, the company concludes the season doing what it does best—Wagner! In May 2016, several of Seattle's favorite Wagnerians return to sing *The Flying Dutchman*, a tale of a cursed sea captain who can be redeemed only by true love. **Greer Grimsley** and **Alfred Walker** return as the Dutchman; **Alwyn Mellor** and **Wendy Bryn Harmer** sing Senta, who will break the doomed mariner's curse. **Nikolai Schukoff** and **David Danholt** (winner of the 2014 International Wagner Competition) sing Erik, and **Daniel Sumegi** returns as Daland. A new production for Seattle audiences, this compelling and stylish show from the Canadian Opera Company brings together a visionary creative team in director **Christopher Alden**, set/costume designer **Allen Moyer**, and lighting designer **Anne Militello. Sebastian Lang-Lessing**, who made his Seattle Opera debut during the company's 50th Anniversary Celebration in August 2014, returns to the podium.

Inspired by the fate of the Dutchman, as well as the plight of the Israelites in *Nabucco*, Seattle Opera and the University of Washington College of Arts and Sciences will launch the first in an annual series of programs, performances, and events that will explore the theme of exile in the 2015/6 season. Together, with experts from a variety of disciplines in history, philosophy, literature, and the performing arts, audiences will extend and enhance their performance experience through multiple perspectives on historical and contemporary representations of exile. Programming will be offered in conjunction with performances of Wagner's work in May 2016.

Seattle Opera's 2015/16 Season

NABUCCO

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Temistocle Solera

In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Performances: August 8 - 22, 2015

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: Teatro alla Scala, Milan Italy on March 9, 1842

Seattle Opera premiere

Cast:

Nabucco	Gordon Hawkins Weston Hurt *
Abigaille	Mary Elizabeth Williams Raffaella Anceletti † *
Zaccaria	Christian Van Horn † Andreas Bauer † *
Fenena	Jamie Barton †
Ismaele	Russell Thomas
High Priest of Baal	Jonathan Silvia
Abdallo	Eric Neuville
Anna	Karen Early Evans
Conductor	Carlo Montanaro
Director	François Racine
Set Design	Robert Schaub and Seattle Opera technical staff
Projection Design	Robert Bonniol, Mode Studios Principal Designer
Costume Design	Ginette Grenier †
Lighting Design	Duane Schuler
Hair & Makeup Design	Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions	Jonathan Dean
Sets and Costumes	Seattle Opera

† Seattle Opera Debut

* On August 9, 14, & 19

Production sponsors: Seattle Opera Foundation and Krielsheimer Endowment Fund.

*Mary Elizabeth Williams, Russell Thomas, and Eric Neuville are former Seattle Opera Young Artists.
Mary Elizabeth Williams and François Racine won Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Awards.*

AN AMERICAN DREAM

Music by Jack Perla

Libretto by Jessica Murphy Moo

In English with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Performances: August 21 and August 23, 2015

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours (including a pre-performance lecture with the orchestra and a post-performance discussion).

Evening performance begins at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

World premiere

Cast:

Jim	Morgan Smith
Eva	D'Ana Lombard †
Hiroko Kimura	Nina Yoshida Nelsen †
Setsuko Kimura	Hae Ji Chang †
Makoto Kimura	Adam Lau †

Conductor	Judith Yan †
Director	Peter Kazaras
Set Design	Robert Schaub and Robert Bonniol, MODE Studios
Costume Design:	Deborah Trout
Lighting Design:	Connie Yun
Sets and Costumes	Seattle Opera

† Seattle Opera Debut

Production sponsor: True Brown Foundation

Morgan Smith is a former Seattle Opera Young Artist.

THE PEARL FISHERS

Music by Georges Bizet

Libretto by Michel Carré and Eugène Cormon

In French with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Performances: October 17 - 31, 2015

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 20 minutes

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: September, 30, 1863 at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris

Previous Seattle Opera Productions: 1994, 2009

Cast:

Zurga	Brett Polegato Keith Phares *
Leïla	Maureen McKay † Elizabeth Zharoff †*
Nadir	John Tessier Anthony Kalil † *
Nourabad	Jonathan Lemalu † Joo Won Kang † *
Conductor	Emmanuel Joel-Hornak †
Director	Andrew Sinclair †
Choreographer	John Malashock †
Set & Costume Design	Zandra Rhodes
Lighting Design	Ron Vodicka †
Hair & Makeup Design	Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions	Jonathan Dean
Sets and Costumes	San Diego Opera

† Seattle Opera Debut

* On October 18 & 30

Production sponsor: Marks Family Foundation

Maureen McKay is a former Seattle Opera Young Artist.

Zandra Rhodes won a Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Award.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

In French with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Performances: January 16 - 30, 2016

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours and 20 minutes

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: May 1, 1786 at the Burgtheater, Vienna

Previous Seattle Opera Productions: 1971, 1983, 1989, 1997, 2009

Cast:

Figaro	Shenyang † Aubrey Allicock *
Susanna	Nuccia Focile Talise Trevigne † *
Countess Almaviva	Bernarda Bobro † Caitlin Lynch *
Count Almaviva	Morgan Smith John Moore † *
Cherubino	Karin Mushegain Elizabeth Pojanowski † *
Marcellina	Deborah Nansteel
Dr. Bartolo	Arthur Woodley
Don Basilio	Steven Cole
Conductor	Gary Thor Wedow
Director	Aidan Lang †
Set Design	Robin Rawstorne †
Costume Design	Elizabeth Whiting †
Lighting Design	Duane Schuler
Hair & Makeup Design	Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions	Jonathan Dean
Sets and Costumes	New Zealand Opera

† Seattle Opera Debut

* On January 17 & 29

Production sponsors: Ann P. Wyckoff and Microsoft

Caitlin Lynch, Morgan Smith, Elizabeth Pojanowski, and Deborah Nansteel are former Seattle Opera Young Artists.

Nuccia Focile won a Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Award.

MARY STUART

Music by Gaetano Donizetti

Libretto by Giuseppe Bardari

In Italian with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

Performances: February 27 - 28 and March 2 - 12, 2016

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: December 30, 1835 at La Scala, Milan

Seattle Opera premiere

Cast:

Maria Stuarda	Christine Rice
	Joyce El-Khoury † *
Elisabetta	Mary Elizabeth Williams
	Keri Alkema † *
	Andrew Owens †
Talbot	Weston Hurt
Cecil	Michael Todd Simpson
Anna	Renée Rapier †
Conductor	Carlo Montanaro
Director	Kevin Newbury †
Set Design	Neil Patel †
Costume Design	Jessica Jahn †
Hair & Makeup Design	Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions	Jonathan Dean
Sets and Costumes	Minnesota Opera

† Seattle Opera Debut

* On February 28 & March 11

Production Sponsors: Maryanne Tagney and David Jones; Lenore M. Hanauer

Mary Elizabeth Williams and Michael Todd Simpson are former Seattle Opera Young Artists.

Mary Elizabeth Williams won a Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Award.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner
In German with English captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: May 7 - 21, 2016

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinee at 2:00 p.m.

Premiere: December 30, 1835 at La Scala, Milan
Premiere: January 2, 1843 at Semperoper, Dresden

Cast:

Dutchman	Greer Grimsley Alfred Walker *
Senta	Alwyn Mellor Wendy Bryn Harmer *
Erik	Nikolai Schukoff David Danholt †*
Daland	Daniel Sumegi
Steersman	Colin Ainsworth †
Mary	Luretta Bybee
Conductor	Sebastian Lang-Lessing
Director	Christopher Alden
Set & Costume Design	Allen Moyer
Lighting Design	Anne Militello †
Hair & Makeup Design	Joyce Degenfelder
English Captions	Jonathan Dean
Sets and Costumes	Canadian Opera Company

† Seattle Opera Debut

* On May 8 & 20

Production sponsors: ArtsFund and Office of Arts & Culture | Seattle

*Greer Grimsley won a Seattle Opera Artist of the Year Award.
David Danholt won Seattle Opera's International Wagner Competition in 2014.*

Seattle Opera Ticket Information

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Five-Opera Renewal and New Subscription Ticket Prices: \$225 to 3,915*

Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619

Online Orders: www.seattleopera.org

All performances take place at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street

Evening performances begin at 7:30 pm, with matinees at 2:00 pm

*Prices include a \$3-per-ticket facility fee and (in some locations) a preferred seating donation.

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About Seattle Opera

Seattle Opera is a leading opera company, recognized both in the United States and around the world. The company is committed to advancing the cultural life in the Pacific Northwest with performances of the highest caliber, and through innovative education and community programs that take opera far beyond the McCaw Hall stage. Each year, more than 95,000 people attend Seattle Opera performances and the company's programs serve more than 65,000 people of all ages. Seattle Opera is especially known for its acclaimed works in the Richard Wagner canon, and has created an "international attraction" in its presentation of Wagner's epic *Ring*, according to *The New York Times*.