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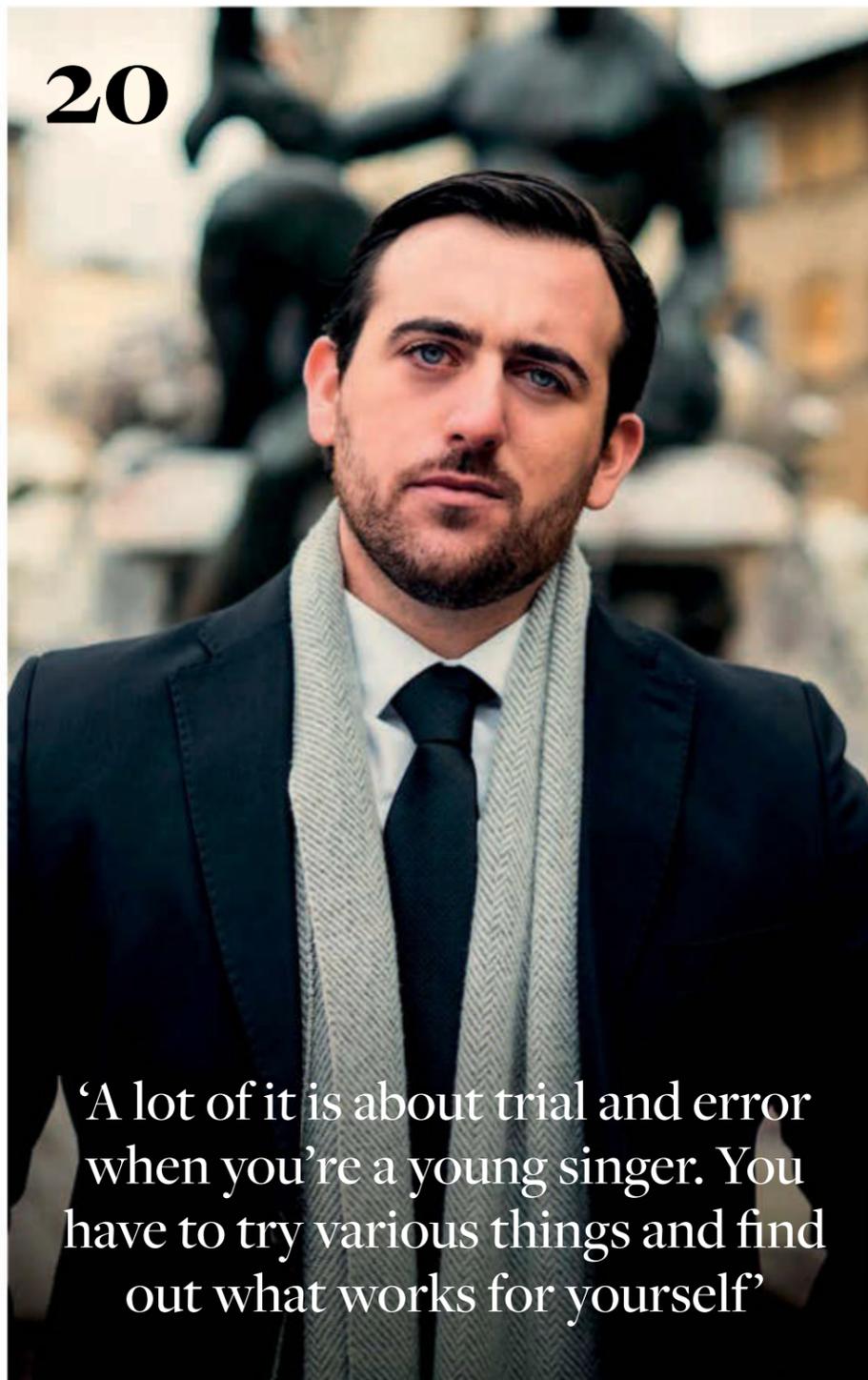
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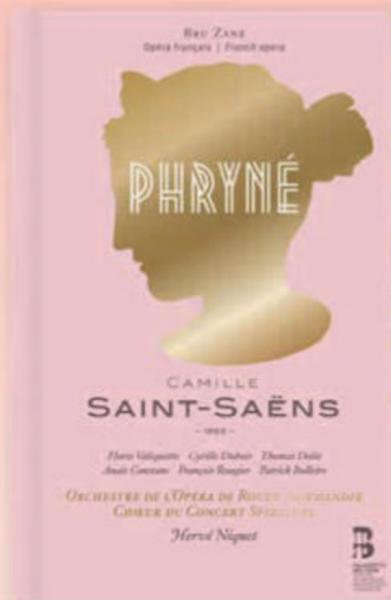
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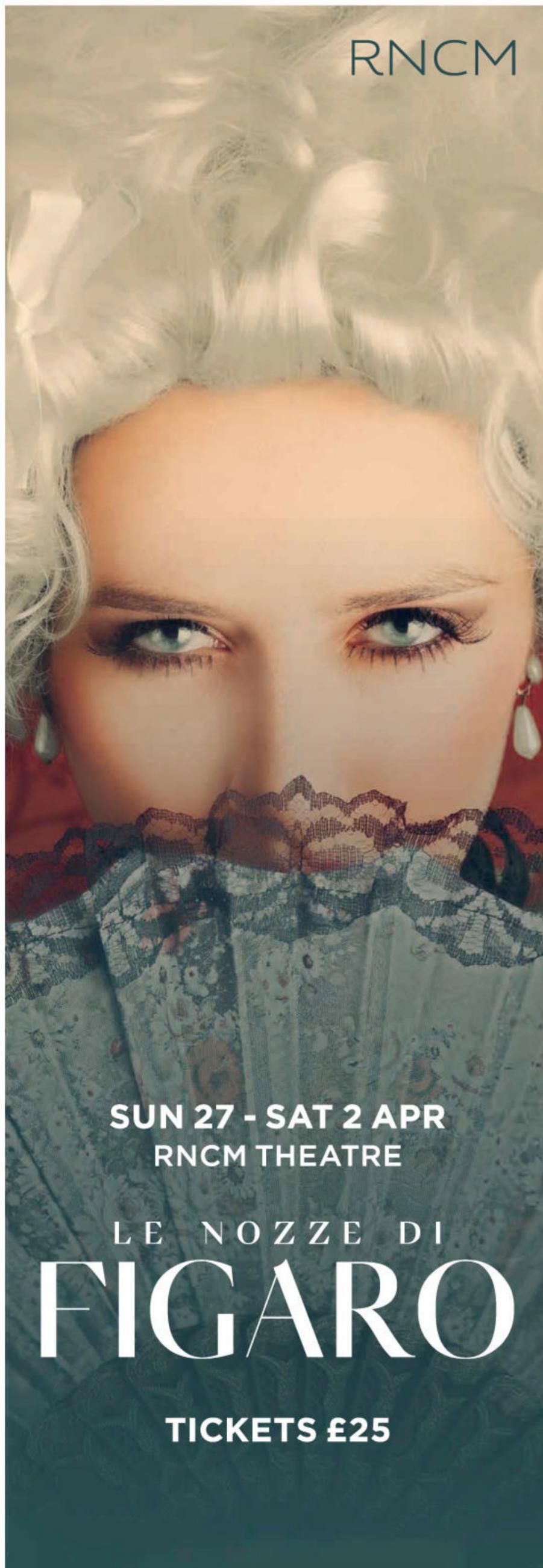
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The long and winding road to success

After two years of hardly any work in the opera world, it was a tall order to ask our regular contributors to put together a list of singers who represent some of opera's brightest hopes for the future. But they did it! Singers are a resilient bunch. In fact, becoming an opera singer is rarely a choice – most artists, young and established, will tell you it's a compulsion that you simply cannot resist once it overtakes you.

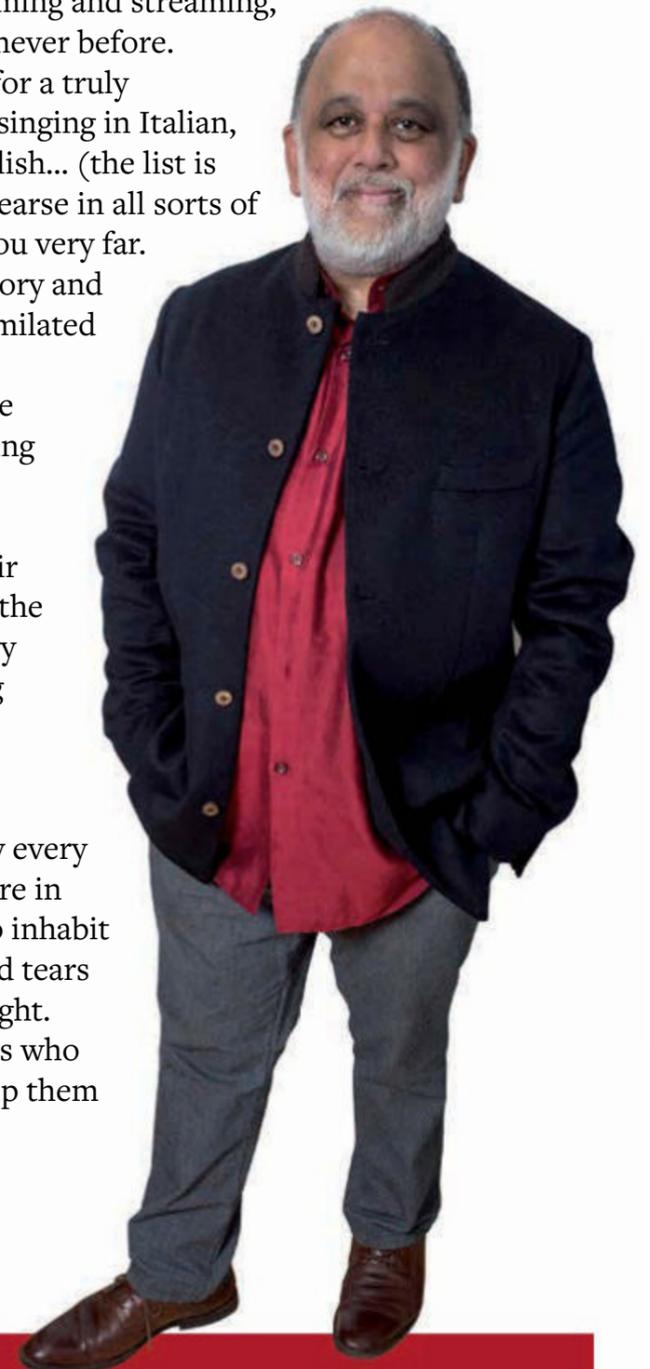
Think about it. The voice is one thing: it has to be beautiful, distinctive and technically failsafe if you are to succeed in your career. And that's just the starting point. Then comes the need to act convincingly – something that is an increasingly necessary part of an opera singer's trade, especially in a world of filming and streaming, where dramatic abilities are under scrutiny as never before.

Next, there are the language skills you need for a truly international career. It's not just a question of singing in Italian, German, Russian, French, Spanish, Czech, English... (the list is getting ever longer); you have to be able to rehearse in all sorts of contexts where your native tongue won't get you very far.

Then there is the need for a prodigious memory and the ability to learn fast – words and music assimilated to perfection with no room for error.

In our special Young Artist Focus in this issue of *Opera Now*, we ask some of the world's leading coaches, casting directors and mentors to help us understand what they look for in singers who have the potential to rise to the top of their profession. As you'll discover, it's not a job for the faint-hearted. Behind every rousing top C, every sparkling coloratura roulade, every tear-jerking lyrical line is a combination of determination, stamina, dedication and extremely hard work. These are qualities that are often on show and applauded in the world of sport. But they apply every bit as much to opera singers. So next time you're in the opera house, think of the elite athletes who inhabit the world of the stage, and the blood, sweat and tears that have been shed to get them into the spotlight. And think of young singers as young champions who deserve our support and encouragement to help them along their arduous path to glory.

Ashutosh Khandekar



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Opera Now captures the drama, colour and vitality of one of the most powerful of all the performing arts. In our print and digital issues, we showcase the creative spirit of opera, both on stage and behind the scenes, with profiles of opera companies, singers, directors and designers. Our in-depth features reflect how diverse cultural elements have influenced opera, including travel, history, literature, art, architecture, politics and philosophy.

Our lively reviews and opinion pages are a platform for writers and critics drawn from all over the world. Our aim is to inspire our opera-loving readers to broaden their knowledge and deepen their passion for this fascinating and stimulating artform.

READERS' LETTERS

In tune with Tebaldi

In your latest February issue, it was good to read the several tributes to Renata Tebaldi on the occasion of her birth centenary. She is one of my favourite singers. However, there were a few things that struck me as misplaced.

I find it odd that Helena Matheopoulos writes that Tebaldi's voice was 'without an upper extension beyond B natural...ideal for verismo and some of the lyrical Verdi roles such as...Aida'. Aida contains several high Cs (and Tebaldi famously came to grief on one in 'O patria mia' at the Paris Opera) and yet she could

certainly execute the note at forte well into the 1960s. Indeed Francis Muzzu in his recordings survey actually praises 'a thumping high C' in the role of Manon Lescaut.

Tebaldi also explained in one interview that Toscanini had to advise her on how to sing a dramatic (not lyrical) role such as Aida, with her essentially lyrical voice.

Matheopoulos also puzzlingly says that 'Tosca, Butterfly and La Gioconda were almost the only roles that Tebaldi and Maria Callas had in common.' Really? On stage, both also appeared as Margherita (*Mefistofele*)

Maddalena (*Andrea Chénier*), Leonora (*La forza del destino*) and Violetta (*La traviata*).

On record, Tebaldi sang Santuzza (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Amelia (*Un ballo in Maschera*), Elisabetta (*Don Carlo*) and Leonora (*Il trovatore*) but not on stage, unlike Callas. Conversely Callas recorded Mimì (*La bohème*) and Manon Lescaut without ever appearing on stage in those roles.

Alan Sievewright writes that Tebaldi added several important verismo operas to her repertoire in the final years of her career: *Fedora* (which she was singing in 1960 before her vocal crisis) and *Andrea*

Chénier (which she was singing as early as 1945); *Salammbô* (which she sang only in 1948) and *L'Amico Fritz* (which she sang only in 1945). As you see, none of these are late at all.

Tannhäuser was conducted by Carl not Karl Böhm, who rather than thinking her Elisabeth 'not always idiomatic' apparently admired her as the finest interpreter of the role he had heard.

The photograph of Anne Evans as Brünnhilde on page 40 is at Welsh National Opera, not the Royal Opera House. She did not sing Brünnhilde at the ROH until 1995.

James Black, via email

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‘Today’s successful singer has to be a successful brand’

An excellent voice is just the starting point for a great career in opera these days. **Dr Ralph Strehle**, a leading performance coach and mentor for young singers at Mascarade Opera Studio, takes us through the formidable armoury of accomplishments, from presentational skills to psychological resilience, that young singers need to develop in order to thrive on today’s opera stages

I am sitting in Café Gamberini in Florence opposite speaker and communication coach Elia Nichols. We talk about the appropriate length of earrings for one of our sopranos and how one of our baritones missed a fantastic networking opportunity after our last concert. Elia explains that it is not only about our artists having certain communication skills but also about them being authentic in their communication with others. I bite into a fritella and wonder what it would be like to have our studio artists ‘Queer-Eyed’. Tan France would have fun. I also wonder how much the demands placed on our young singers have changed over the years. Being an excellent performer alone no longer guarantees a career. A successful singer nowadays also has to be a successful brand.

At Mascarade Opera Studio, I regularly hold performance profiling sessions with our singers and pianists. In these sessions they agree on what they think are the most important characteristics for ‘making it’ in their career. They then rate themselves

and, sometimes, their colleagues, on these characteristics. Performance profiling is a pretty good feedback tool as it provides me with an overview of how our artists perceive themselves. In subsequent individual sessions, I use these profiles as a basis for building individual training and performance programmes. At the elite level, you have to start with individual needs, not a generic one-fits-all training programme.

In our last profiling session, our artists identified the following characteristics required to become an elite professional in their field: Appearance, Self-Belief, Team Player, Professional Skills, Presentation Skills, Physical Health, Artistry, Technique, Resilience, Support Network. Each of these characteristics involved sub-items. Professional Skills, for example, included time management, diary management, written and oral communication skills. Physical Health included stamina, flexibility, strength, sleep and nutrition. I am delighted with the progress our artists have made in terms of artistry



Opposite page: Dr Ralph Strehle in a performance profiling session with Polixeni Tziouvaras:

Left: Stage presence: Floriana Cicio, Henry Websdale and Alexandria Wreggelsworth working with Dr Strehle

Below: Head of music Julia Lynch in a coaching session with Polixeni Tziouvaras

and technique. I regularly discuss these items with my core artistic team: our joint heads of music Julia Lynch and Jonathan Papp, voice teacher James Platt, stage director Marie Lambert and artistic consultant soprano Anush Hovhannisyian. At Mascarade, we lead by example, we work as a team, we listen to our colleagues and our artists. The one skill our artists agree they lack more than others are presentation skills. Hence my meeting with Elia.

The first six to seven months of our programme are built around skill enhancement and skills acquisition. We call this the foundation period, which entails a lot of repertoire coaching, vocal consultancy, acting and learning Italian. It also involves working on all those areas identified by our artists in the profiling session. Performances in this period are normally low-exposure events. It's not yet the time to shine. Recent research in football has showed that players brought to the Premier League can take almost half a season to find their form. It's the same for our artists: you can't just throw them into a new environment and expect them to perform well straight away. Psychologically speaking, during the foundation period, we help our artists to increase their perceived competence. They really need to believe they can make it at the top level. Once they have that belief, they feel at home within themselves and here in Florence. That's the time to shine.

After the foundation period we enter the performance-oriented period, which involves the possibility of performing roles at our partner house Teatro la Fenice in Venice and at other European houses which form part of our network. With our training base in Florence and our performance base in Venice, we consider ourselves a mobile studio. If the market doesn't come to us, we come to the market. This March, for example, we have a mainstage audition tour across Germany and Austria in houses such as Staatstheater Braunschweig and Landestheater Linz.

Auditioning and performing in different countries requires resilience, the ability to adapt successfully to a variety of challenging situations and to use these situations as an opportunity for growth. That



Emerging Artists Young Talent



Clockwise from above: Staff and students of the Mascarade Opera Studio with tenors Lawrence Brownlee and Michael Spyres

Helping artists to achieve peak performance: Faik Mansuroğlu in recital

Voice teacher James Platt coaches an auditionee in hoping for a place in the final round in Venice

Time to shine: Julia Lynch prepares artists for their final audition and public concert on the stage of the Teatro Malibran, Venice.

means, for one, being part of a production where the rehearsal language is not English. And that can be very scary because studio artists in general are mostly given smaller roles in productions and holding up the rehearsal process because they don't understand what's going on is a big no-no.

The structure of our training and performance programme is unique in that it allows our artists to grow in a controlled manner and therefore to increase their resilience levels. If we push them too hard, they will feel they cannot cope and shut down; if we are too soft on them, they will get bored. Getting the balance right means hitting the sweet spot, the optimal zone of performance. It is exhilarating to hear a young artist singing at their best. Achieving this requires expertise and time. As an independent institution not bound to a single opera house, we are fortunate to have both. We are also fortunate to be sponsored by philanthropists who share our vision and who are interested in longevity and sustainability. No short-term quick fixes, our artists are in it for the long run.

Nobody is interested in your spicy artisan chutney recipe posted on Instagram until you have established yourself as a leader in your field. How to project a professional image, particularly on social media, is tricky for young singers. It requires the careful mixing of one's public and private identity. Revealing –but not *too* revealing. Enough to satisfy our in-built voyeurism without crossing the line.

Back in Gamberini, I discuss with Elia how difficult it is to get this right. She asks me for social media images of our current singers and pianists. It's

important they start seeing and treating themselves as a brand. At the same time, we expect them to be individuals, real life people. It's a difficult balancing act. Fortunately, soprano Anush Hovhannisyanyan, who has won considerable acclaim on opera stages around the world, regularly advises our young artists on how to promote themselves on social media. For an opera company, an artist with a large number of followers on social media potentially increases ticket sales and provides free marketing.

A contemporary Young Artist Programme (YAP) needs to have a multi-faceted approach to its training and performance provision. Many YAPs now also expect their artists to engage with local communities through outreach activities, meaning they have to be able to sing in a variety of unconventional places engaging directly with new audiences. To let artists just get on with this all and expect them to swim rather than sink is unethical. A YAP is a continued professional development programme and as such it offers a hybrid form of learning and working. The continued learning aspect must not get lost, otherwise our youngsters simply become cheap labour. At Mascarade we have a quality assurance framework which ensures that the learning part of our programme is efficient, appropriate, and timely. As Director and Performance Coach, I am very proud we have quality assurance at the heart of what we do. It also gives our artists the chance to directly feed back into our programme activities, which in turn increases their autonomy and motivation.

I met co-founders Max Fane, Frankie Parham and Roger Granville four years ago in Glasgow. Back then



Young Talent

Emerging Artists

they asked me whether I could design an exciting new and innovative opera training programme. It took two years to design the programme which I based on the latest insights from music performance psychology and education management. Our new two-year programme starting in September 2022 retains all of these aspects but has a more pronounced international performance dimension. My co-director Candice Wood and head of strategic partnerships and communications Maddalena Massafra have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to build an international partner network which includes opera houses and festivals throughout Europe. In the coming years we will be expanding our network to the US.

I shake hands with Elia. She will email me a draft proposal for a series of presentation workshops in the coming days. Back in the studio at the Palazzo Corsini I hear extracts of *The Pearl Fishers*' Duet coming from the Sala del Camino. Our mezzo is working on Walton's *The Bear* in the Walter Scott Room. I have a feedback meeting with our Canadian baritone who has just come back from the finals of the Paris Opera competition. I open my laptop, which has a permanent sticker at the front reminding me to stay attuned to the ever-changing environment and demands of our profession: 'What got you here might not get you there'. **ON**

Dr Ralph Strehle is the Director of the Mascarade Opera Studio, soon to become the new Mascarade Emerging Artists programme run in collaboration with the Teatro La Fenice Foundation



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PREVIEWS, NEWS AND EVENTS IN THE OPERA WORLD

NEWS & NOTES**Opera singers fight back after Covid cancellations**

Leading opera singers took to social media to express their outrage following the cancellation of the scheduled run of *Carmen* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie/De Munt, Belgium's leading opera house in Brussels. The cancellation, just days before opening night, was forced after Belgium's government brought in strict rules surrounding public gatherings with the rapid spread of Covid's Omicron variant. The new rules would have reduced La Monnaie's seating capacity from 1,200 a night to a mere 200. A spokesman for the opera company said that the restrictions would result in a box-office loss of €900,000: 'We would only be able to sell 2,400 tickets instead of the planned 13,800, and it becomes clear that such a scenario would not meet everyone's expectations.'

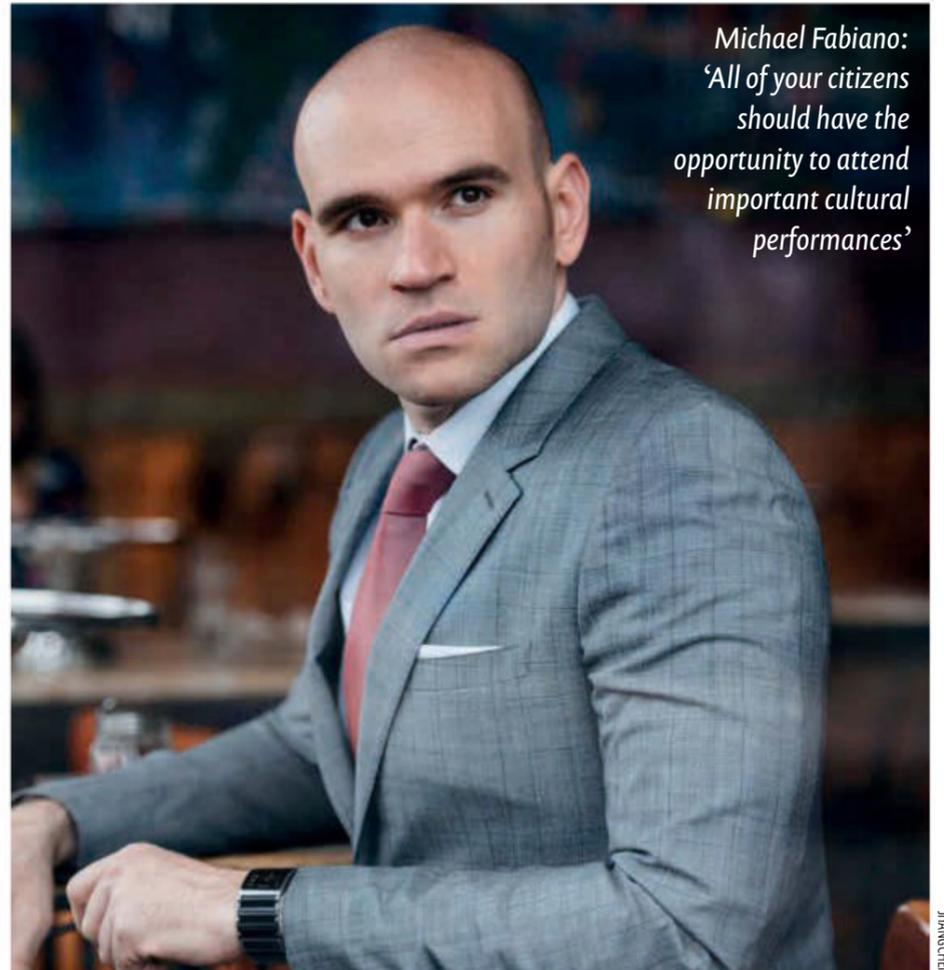
The production of *Carmen* staged by Dmitri Tcherniakov was due to star Stéphanie d'Oustrac and Ève-Maud Hubeaux alternating in the title role. Other cast members included Michael Fabiano,

Andrea Carè, Elsa Dreisig, Anne-Catherine Gillet, Jean-Sébastien Bou, Jean-Fernand Setti, and Pierre Doyen. The 12-performance run was to take place from 23 January to 13 February.

The distinguished American tenor Michael Fabiano, who was due to sing Don José, took to social media to call on Brussels' minister Sven Gatz to reopen the theatre: 'I call on you to fix this problem now. Your workers need you. Be a hero to us. Rise above.'

Fabiano questioned the scientific basis for continuing to shut opera productions down despite everyone in the company being vaccinated, calling the measure 'draconian', especially when major theatres in London, Paris and Milan were continuing to present opera.

The tenor also addressed a letter to the Liberal Democrat Belgian prime minister Alexander De Croo in which he underlined the importance of the arts in society: 'Significant studies have shown that the



Michael Fabiano:
'All of your citizens should have the opportunity to attend important cultural performances'

risk of people not having music in their lives is grave enough to impair mental health and personal discipline,' the tenor wrote.

'All of your citizens should have the opportunity to attend important cultural performances that they have looked forward to for many months during the pandemic.'

In response, the Belgian government insisted that the Omicron variant continued to pose a serious risk to public health and that enclosed spaces in theatres such as La

Monnaie were not equipped to ensure safe performances that complied with safety regulations to prevent the spread of the virus.

The Monnaie's general director Peter de Caluwe said that while he deeply regretted the decision to cancel, La Monnaie as a public entity was bound by the rules set by the government. He added that he hoped that performances of Puccini's *Il Trittico*, due to open on 15 March, would go ahead as planned.

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Edward Gardner takes up Norwegian National Opera post

One of the UK's leading conductors, Edward Gardner, has been appointed as music director of the Norwegian Opera & Ballet. He took up the position of artistic adviser to the company on 1 February and will begin his tenure as music

director on 1 August 2024.

Gardner, who has been a frequent visitor to Norway said, 'I had a fantastic collaboration with the talented musicians there over the past year, and I look forward to creating performances of the highest quality for Norwegian

and international audiences in one of the world's best opera houses.'

As artistic adviser, Gardner will conduct several opera productions in Oslo, including Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* and Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* in the spring of 2023.

The Norwegian Opera & Ballet's opera director, Randi Stene, said she was delighted to welcome the new Music Director. 'Ed performed Wagner and Richard Strauss with us last season and proved his unique musical capacity, his operatic sensibility, *continued* >

Edward Gardner with opera boss Randi Stene in front of Oslo's distinctive opera house



his professionalism and his winning interpersonal expertise,' she said. 'With him on board, the future of opera in Norway looks brighter than ever. I am very much looking forward to our close collaboration.'

Gardner is currently principal conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also chief conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic in Norway, a position he will relinquish at the end of the 2023/24 season before he moves on to Oslo. His operatic credentials are many: he held the post of music director at English National Opera from 2007 to 2015, and he has been a regular guest conductor at companies such as New York's Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, La Scala, Chicago Lyric Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Opéra National de Paris. He is currently working on a new production of Britten's *Peter Grimes* at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich directed by Stefan Herheim.

• French conductor Marie Jacquot has been appointed Chief Conductor of the Royal

Danish Opera in Copenhagen. She begins her five-year term with the opera company in the 2024/25 season.

Having studied as a trombonist in Paris, Jacquot began to focus on her talents as a conductor with studies in Vienna and Weimar. She has built a formidable reputation in the German opera world following her appointment in 2019 as music director at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, based in Dusseldorf and Duisburg.

Her recent Danish appointment, which follows her highly acclaimed conducting of Gounod's *Faust* in Copenhagen last September, puts her at the helm of an important European operatic flagship.



Marie Jacquot

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21 MAR

JOYCE DIDONATO

One of the most widely acclaimed and admired singers of our time, American mezzo Joyce DiDonato has had a busy year so far, with ovations for her role as Irene in Handel's *Theodora* at the Royal Opera House in London and a major world tour of her new environmental awareness project, *Eden*. We catch up with this singer-activist par excellence as she pauses for breath following the release of her new album.

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OBITUARY

EZIO FRIGERIO

1930-2022

by Benjamin Ivry



Frigerio's typically sumptuous sets for La Scala's *Rigoletto*, which remained in the company's repertoire for nearly 30 years

Ezio Frigerio, the scenic designer who died after a long illness on 2 February aged 91, titled his memoir *I am a Magician* (Baldini & Castoldi, 2021). No hyperbole was involved, for Frigerio's work over a half-century, perhaps most notably in collaboration with the director Giorgio Strehler, enchanted and bewitched opera audiences worldwide.

Frigerio transmuted to the opera stage visuals imprinted in his memory from early studies as an architect in Milan, followed by exposure to sky and sea as a deck officer in the Italian Navy. Starting with his first opera sets designed in the 1950s for Strehler, who at first limited him to sketching costumes, Frigerio used architecture as a remembered dream. An early revelation was in 1943, when his wealthy Lombard family retreated to Sansepolcro in Tuscany after the fall of Mussolini, whose regime his relatives had supported. There he saw *The Resurrection*, a fresco painting by the Italian Renaissance

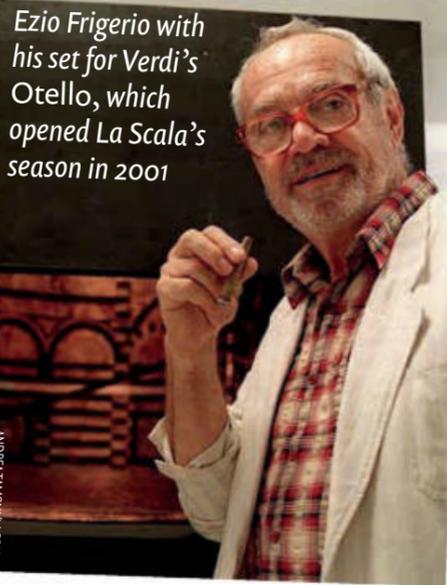
master Piero della Francesca, in a communal meeting hall.

Piero's expression of emotion through depictions of architecture transfixed Frigerio, who would embrace the challenge of recounting drama and narrative through onstage images. His *Don Giovanni* for La Scala with Strehler in 1987 featured ominously overhanging designs that sometimes even distracted from the excellent cast, led by Thomas Allen in the title role.

In *Fifty Years of Theater with Giorgio Strehler* (Skira), Frigerio recounted how, when not arguing with his colleague whom he considered 'elusive, solitary, friendless...a snake charmer', he attempted to fulfil the director's Leftist idealism.

Despite constant squabbles, Strehler considered Frigerio indispensable and when the latter was scheduled to provide designs for Fellini's *Satyricon* (1969) Strehler phoned the filmmaker to complain that he desperately needed Frigerio for a different project; the designer was duly dismissed from Fellini's film.

Ezio Frigerio with his set for Verdi's *Otello*, which opened La Scala's season in 2001



Both Frigerio and Strehler disdained the decorative approach to opera of rival opera director Luchino Visconti. Frigerio once commented: 'For us, Visconti did upholstery, not theatre.' Yet both collaborators believed that the real enemies were popular distractions such as 'telly' and 'footie', that they felt kept a wider public away from opera houses across Europe.

They fought back with a *Marriage of Figaro* for the Paris Opéra in 1974 with all the spacious sky and air that one might expect from a former mariner.

That same year, Frigerio, who was already renowned for sweeping, lavish designs, created for the Lyric Opera of Chicago an intimate set for *Don Pasquale* directed by Eduardo De Filippo.

To concentrate the vast dimensions of the Chicago auditorium, Frigerio situated a travelling company's platform stage at the centre of a palace; most of the action occurred on the platform or in front of it. The singers, including Ileana

Cotrubaş, Alfredo Kraus, and Wladimiro Ganzarolli in the title role, gave stellar performances.

Monumentality was usually Frigerio's forte, as in a 2001 Edinburgh *La traviata* in which opulent sets weighed down the tragic characters; or a 2013 Covent Garden *La Rondine* in which wanton Parisian misbehaviour was epitomised by decadent Art Nouveau-style walls.

Yet Frigerio's magic could also express simplicity, as in a 2009 production of Gounod's *Mireille*, with an open field at harvest time, again evoking open spaces and oxygen of the designer's heyday with Strehler.

When some sets did not please the critics or public, like his 1988 marmorean pillars for a Metropolitan Opera *Il trovatore*, he cannily repurposed them. The same shiny columns were reused by Frigerio for a 1993 Tokyo premiere of *Elizabeth*, a play by Francisco Ors about Queen Elizabeth I, in which the title role was played by Bando Tamasaburo V, a male kabuki star noted for portraying female roles. Sometimes opposition to Frigerio's work was budget-related, as when his elaborate sets for *Ernani* at La Scala in 1982 looked overly sumptuous at a time of economic recession, with multiple levels that required unusual athleticism from the singers.

Despite such occasional hiccups, Frigerio's overall achievement was consistently spellbinding. At a 2018 tribute at Madrid's Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum and Teatro de la Zarzuela, Daniel Bianco, director of the latter house, termed Frigerio and his wife, the costume designer Franca Squarciapino, 'Two wizards capable of building a world'. So Frigerio did indeed achieve his self-defined status as an opera stage conjurer. **ON**



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REMI SEDMÁKOVÁ

REMI SEDMÁKOVÁ

Letter from Venice

By Susan Nickalls

At the opening night of La Fenice's *Fidelio* last November, the theatre's CEO and artistic director, Fortunato Ortombina, looked visibly relieved to see the theatre full again. Beethoven's opera should have headlined the previous year's season but like many productions to mark the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth, it was cancelled in the pandemic.

The beginning of Venice's opera season in November usually coincides with La Festa della Madonna della Salute celebrations to mark the end of the plague in 1631. Especially for the festivities, a temporary votive bridge is built over the Grand Canal to the magnificent domed church of Santa Maria della Salute (St Mary of Health). Like many Venetians, Ortombina goes to the church every year to give thanks for

the good health of the citizens. For him, this rite was even more important this year.

'I arrived a few minutes before 10pm as the church was closing, but they allowed me inside and I was alone there. As I lit my candles I felt very lucky that we were able to open this season. Last year we didn't open at all and in 2019 we had the aqua alta, the high waters. So the combination of Salute with the bridge and *Fidelio* is very symbolic. With Salute we hope our health every day is better now with the vaccination and our production of *Fidelio* is even more appropriate than it would have been last year. Every opera speaks about freedom, love or death but it would be hard to find another

Venice's Sovrintendente, Fortunato Ortombina: 'I felt as if I'd aged 10 years during the pandemic'

piece in the history of art and music where every one of the spectators feels like the prisoners in the first act of *Fidelio* who emerge from the darkness of their cave and look at the sky. It was very touching.'

In many ways, Ortombina says they are just beginning to understand the nightmare of the pandemic. 'I lost 10 years of my life. It was very tiring

La Fenice: A symbol of cultural continuity and resilience in Venice

because when you have loans from the government and things are changing every two months, it's not possible to make a strategy. Projects we had spent years building up, we had to throw away. But we had to make something interesting because we had



MICHELE CROCIEREA

Adapting the theatre for live streaming and socially distanced performing – including the ark-like staging

a responsibility to our 300 employees and their families.'

During the first lockdown, from February to June 2020, the theatre was 'kept alive' by the government who paid 80 per cent of the salaries of all the theatre's full-time employees. Over the next four months to October, Ortombina put together a new season to cater for a maximum audience of 300 people. 'We started with smaller pieces without chorus while at the same time arranging concerts for the chorus so everyone could work on a different programme. This was because an 80-strong chorus on stage two meters apart would have needed a space the size of Trafalgar Square! We also transformed the theatre itself, replacing the orchestra pit and chairs downstairs with a staged area. The idea was to build a keel, like an ark, so that symbolically the building itself became something that people and their families could set sail in, to land in a new world.'

It's a structure the theatre used for nearly a year, putting on smaller operas such as Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and



UFFICIO STAMPA



MICHELE GROSERA

a semi-staged production of Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*. From the second lockdown at the end of October 2020 with no audiences allowed in the theatre and no more government money, Ortombina put two strategies into play. Plan A was to do something sustainable, even



MICHELE GROSERA

without spectators, while Plan B involved preparing for a time when the public could come to the theatre again. So from November 2020 to March 2021, there were three concerts a month in La Fenice and the Malibran Theatre.

Above: Opening night of Fidelio at La Fenice – a landmark event for the Venetian public, offering hope for the future

Left: Fortunato Ortombina (right) taking part in Venice's vaccination drive, with two of the city's leading health officials, Edgardo Contato and Manuela Lanzarin

During this time, the number of subscribers to Fenice's YouTube channel, which opened in 2012, rocketed. Before the first lockdown in March 2020 La Fenice had 110,000 subscribers and 18 million views, the highest in Italy. But by November 2021, 18 months later, Ortombina was delighted to see that the streaming views had more than doubled to 37 million.

'Our goal was not to lose the connection with our public, we wanted to keep a relationship with them. There was a sense



UFFICIO STAMPA

Santa Maria della Salute, the scene of festivities that coincide with the opening of La Fenice's season

a witty farce about brawling fisherman in Chioggia, directed by Venetian Damiano Michieletto. In April, Verdi's *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (The Lombards on the First Crusade) will be performed at Fenice for the first time since 1844 when it was staged shortly after its premiere. It is set during the first crusade when the Venice Republic had a special relationship with the Middle East.

There will be a new production of Vivaldi's *Griselda*, based on a medieval Italian tale of female constancy retold by Boccaccio and Chaucer, in April/May.

Other highlights include Gounod's *Faust* in April and Britten's *Peter Grimes*, directed by Paul Curran, in June/July. Despite Britten having had a special relationship with Venice – the *Turn of the Screw* was premiered at La Fenice and *Death in Venice* is set in the city – this is the opera's first performance at La Fenice.

The last few years have been tough for companies staging live performances and at the time of writing, December 2021, the Omicron variant is causing uncertainty again. But despite all this, Ortombina remains positive.

'It has been such an effort and although we don't have to forget and forgive all the negatives, there have been many positives. Venice last year was like a big ship, deserted, abandoned with only one engine left running: La Fenice. We have survived as a company and everyone has done their best to stay alive in order to keep on doing our public service to provide music to humanity.' **ON** www.teatrolafenice.it

'Venice last year was like a big ship, deserted, abandoned with only one engine left running: La Fenice'

that audiences all round the world were following us during this time. I don't think streaming works against the live experience. It is a plus as it cultivates a nostalgia for the place so that people want to come back as soon as possible.'

However, Ortombina says the reality is that subscriptions are down by 10-15 per cent. Like many other opera houses in Italy with predominantly older audiences, La Fenice discovered that many of its regulars did not survive the pandemic.

'It makes me sad as I have great memories of the people I've spoken to over the years but many of them are not here anymore. There are also people so ill they don't dare walk into Fenice and for those who do come it's less comfortable because of the rules. Opera is something humanity needs but the world has changed. Families are not the same when someone dies and it is the same for us at La Fenice. In terms of our approach in making a season we have to think more about the local

public. So one of the results of this tragedy is that we will try harder to keep in contact with people. It's important to me that we succeed in making them feel La Fenice is their house because without spectators it's difficult to calculate how sustainable it will be to produce concerts just for streaming.'

The current season has a strong Italian line up as the city-state of Venice celebrates its 1,600th anniversary. March sees the world premiere of Giorgio Battistelli's *Le baruffe*,

Born to be *great*

By **Helena Matheopoulos**

Freddie De Tommaso is one of the brightest stars of a new generation of talent. A tenor with an exceptional voice, winning charisma and a riveting stage presence that sets him in line with the greatest operatic artists of the past century

'I learn well by listening, and it was listening to Corelli throughout my education that, I think, helped shape my voice and my technique'

An air of destiny surrounds Freddie De Tommaso. Whereas many aspiring young singers speak of the struggles of building a career, opportunities seem to come to this young tenor, rather than the other way round. There is still a wide-eyed expression of surprise in his face when he talks about the way events have shaped his meteoric rise.

De Tommaso made operatic history in 2018, aged 24, winning all three prizes – the First Prize, the Plácido Domingo and the Verdi Prize – at the prestigious Francesco Viñas Singing Competition in Barcelona.

Peter Katona, director of casting at Covent Garden, came back from the competition surprised and amazed enough to ring me to report the unusual news. And he put his money where his mouth was soon enough by casting the fledgling young Italian/British tenor as Cassio in the 2019 production of *Otello* featuring Gregory Kunde in the title role. (De Tommaso had already appeared at the ROH stage in the 2016/17 season as part of the chorus of apprentices in a production of *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, conducted by Antonio Pappano). In December last year, he made operatic history again when he became the youngest tenor to sing Cavardossi in *Tosca* at Covent Garden, aged just 28. Once again,

De Tommaso aged 24, competing for what turned out to be a triple triumph at the Viñas Competition in 2018



the fates intervened to put him in the spotlight when he stepped in for Bryan Hymel early in the Covent Garden run, when the American tenor encountered some vocal problems halfway through a performance. Freddie brought the house down. It was, as *The Times* reported, a ‘You had to be there’ moment.

I met up with this instantly likeable, unpretentious and extremely bright young singer at last summer’s Georg Solti Accademia’s annual course for young singers at Castiglione della Pescaia, an unassuming Italia seaside resort in the south of Tuscany where the Solti family has a home. A regular habitué of the course, this time De Tommaso was attending not as a student, but as a coach – a role in which he appeared to be well aided by his sunny disposition, innate communicative gifts, technical know-how and fresh approach.

‘I first came here in 2017, my last year as an undergraduate at RAM. My coaches were Barbara Frittoli and Massimo Giordani, who, being a tenor himself made me understand a lot about tenor singing. A lot of it is about trial and error when you’re a young singer. You have to try various things and find out what works for yourself.

De Tommaso was born into an opera-loving family; his Italian father hailed from Apulia in southern Italy. He was born in London, but at the age of two moved to his mother’s native town, Tunbridge Wells in Kent, where his parents started a family-run Italian restaurant. His father would play recordings of his operatic favourites, Franco Corelli and Luciano Pavarotti, and De Tommaso recalls ‘listening to Pav’ while eating pasta as a child.

School in Tunbridge Wells was the place where he first discovered he had a voice and one of his teachers was convinced he should consider music as a career. ‘But after school I decided to go to Bristol University to study French and Italian. I left after a year – I’d just had enough. I went back to Tunbridge Wells and worked at the family restaurant. But although I hadn’t got into the choir at university, my time there had been very good for my voice since I sang frequently from the side of the rugby pitch! So I said to my Mum that I wanted to go and see my old school teacher again. She said yes, go ahead. And we were both amazed at how much the voice had changed in the intervening two years, despite my smoking and drinking! I was about 20 at the time and we started working on my singing – first as bass baritone and then as a baritone.

‘After a variety of twists and turns and meetings with several people, I went to sing for Mark Wildman, a distinguished professor of singing at the Royal Academy of Music. He asked me, “What do you want to do with your life? What do you think you are meant to do?” I told him I intended to go back to Bristol for my second year at university, but didn’t really want to. He replied, “No, you shouldn’t do that. I think that you should start here, on Monday!” So, I had a >

Below: As Cavaradossi at the Royal Opera House, where De Tommaso caused a sensation when he stepped into the role halfway through one of the performances

Right: As Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly at the Vienna State Opera with Asmik Gregorian

Below right: As Cassio at the Royal Opera House, his first major mainstage role in 2019



TRISTRAM MENTON

CATHERINE ASHMORE



Above: As Don José in Vienna State Opera's Carmen

Centre: With Joseph Calleja in The Bavarian State Opera's Norma

sort of sneaky, back-door entrance to the RAM, and studied as a baritone for about a year and a half – mostly Mozart and bel canto roles.

“Then one day, during the second term of the second year, after finishing our exercises, which went up to F sharp – the top of the baritone’s range – Mark said, “Let’s go up to G.” That then became an A-flat, then A – real tenor territory. And we kept going higher, right up to a top C which cracked majestically in the middle! Still, this was pretty astounding.

“What do you think?” Mark asked. I replied, let me go away and think about it over the weekend. So I thought about the choice between a baritone and a tenor. At the back of my mind the idea of being a tenor had always seemed like a good thing. And, after about a month of exercises and trying out some Mozart and Handel roles, where the tessitura is not very high, Mark also asked the advice of some of his colleagues, including the distinguished tenors Ryland Davies and Dennis O’Neill. By common consent we decided that this was it! I was a tenor!”

It was while he was still a student at the Academy, that Freddie decided to attend the Viñas Competition

in Barcelona. ‘I went because they hadn’t put me in the opera that term, so I had nothing to do. I spoke to a friend who told me, “Oh, I’m just going off to a competition in Spain”. I asked him what it was called and he told me it was the Francesco Viñas Competition. I looked it up out of curiosity and discovered that I had just missed the London trials but could still make the auditions in Barcelona. I thought, why not?’

“So off I went, and discovered in the first round that everybody there was much older than me. I was 23 at the time – the last day of the auditions was two days before my 24th birthday – and thought gosh, these are serious people. Even so, I went into the audition and sang my first piece, ‘Ella mi fu rapita’ from *Rigoletto*. When I think back on it, it makes me laugh, because I wouldn’t choose that now – youth and ignorance make one bold! Then I thought, as I don’t know anybody there, I will just sit and watch some of the other contestants. And, having watched about eight, I thought, I’m in the wrong place. This is way above my league. I should pack my case and look up the flights back to London.’



Meanwhile, the list of contestants who had got through to the second round of auditions had just been posted. And on it was the name Freddie De Tommaso. So there was no need to pack. ‘For round two, I sang ‘La storia del pastore’, Corrado’s aria from *Il corsaro* and Werther’s ‘Le souffle du printemps’. Throughout, I followed Mark’s advice. He had told me, “Don’t try to impress anybody. Choose things that are slightly more lyrical than your full potential and just sing!”’

With a triumphant triple victory at the Viñas Competition under his belt, agents and offers started pouring in. De Tommaso chose Maria Mott of Intermusica to represent him (a wise move) and then – ‘and I don’t know if this was the right choice’ – he decided to join the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at Covent Garden. Jumping straight from a music conservatoire to a fully fledged international career – which was what he was being offered – ‘seemed a bit crazy. I wanted to get into a serious programme for a year and Jette Parker was ideal. It is normally for two years, but after a year, I felt ready to go.’ His first assignment was the small but telling role of Cassio in Covent Garden’s production of *Otello*

in 2019, which he sang on stage after acting as cover during company’s preceding tour of Japan. Although performances of *La traviata* in several theatres were cancelled owing to Covid, he was lucky enough to sing Macduff in *Macbeth*, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* and the Italian tenor in *Der Rosenkavalier* in Vienna, the only opera house that continued to function during the early part of the pandemic.

Last summer found him recording the role of Gustavo in Verdi’s *Un ballo in maschera* ‘next to a fabulous Spanish soprano, Saioa Hernández – the real McCoy.’ The recording is due for release on the Pentatone label. ‘The first act in *Ballo*, which I love, is non-stop singing for the tenor. Then you have a break while the soprano sings her big aria, and then you’re straight into the duet and the trio. I’m due to sing the role with Lise Davidsen [another new generation luminary represented by Maria Mott and signed by Decca]. We have great plans ahead together!’ De Tommaso will also be singing the role of Gustavo in concert at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland this July, where he will be giving a recital with pianist Jonathan Papp.

As Macduff in Vienna State Opera’s *Macbeth*



The summer of 2020 also included his first Don José in *Carmen* in Gran Canaria in Spain, and earlier this season he sang the role at the Vienna State Opera. ‘Don José is not very heavy. What I find most difficult is his first big sing in his encounter with Micaëla, ‘Ma mère, je la vois’, which is very high! He is beginning to delve into the lirico spinto repertoire, ‘because this is where his voice is right now.’ His next roles in this repertoire will be Cavaradossi at Covent Garden and Maurizio in *Adriana Lecouvreur* at La Scala in March 2022 – one performance with Anna Netrebko and one with Maria Agresta.

Is there any role he would not like to die without having sung? ‘Andrea Chenier! It’s just amazing! And Des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut* and *Calaf* in *Turandot*. I also love the lesser known verismo, especially Massenet’s *Iris*, which is seldom done. The plot is crackers, but the music is fantastic! In fact, my first professional appearance was in the chorus at Opera Holland Park’s production in 2017. I was also in their chorus for *La bohème* and *The Queen of Spades*. And, of course, it goes without saying that I would love to do all the great Verdi roles in *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Forza*, *Aida*, *Otello*...’

Not *Rigoletto*? ‘Maybe... but I don’t understand how Caruso managed to sing that and also sing the heavy verismo parts like Eleazar in *La Juive*. The Duke’s tessitura in *Rigoletto* is very, very high, almost that of a Rossini tenor, especially in those *addios* in the duet and then the final quartet. Caruso’s range was just amazing.’

For all his admiration of Caruso, De Tommaso’s favourite tenor is Franco Corelli, the one whose recordings he listens to most and which give him the

greatest pleasure. He describes Corelli as his ‘other teacher’. ‘I find I learn well by listening, and it was listening to Corelli throughout my education that, I think, helped shape my voice and my technique. It was a great honour to be able to celebrate the centenary of his birth by releasing my first album’. The Decca release includes many of the Italian songs in Corelli’s repertoire. ‘I find his singing utterly thrilling, more so than any other tenor in history. For me, he is the ultimate. I would love to emulate his career, with two small changes: I would like to sing Des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut* and *Otello*. Franco never sang these two roles, which I think is a great shame.’

He is determined not to fall into the trap of ruining his voice prematurely by singing the wrong roles at the wrong time, the fate of many gifted tenors, and relies on his team of advisers who include Mark Wildman and Jonathan Papp, as well as his agent and the team at Decca, with which he has signed an exclusive contract and who obviously want him there for the long run, which will put him on the roll-call of some of the most illustrious names in operatic history, including Pavarotti, Sutherland, Solti and Mehta.

Away from the stage, how does he like to relax? ‘I do gym every day, have done since the age of 16 and really enjoy it.’ (Obviously excellent for a young singer’s stamina and posture). ‘I also like playing golf. That’s all I have time for!’ **ON**



Above: Coaching at the Georg Solti Accademia in Tuscany

Right: Backstage at the Oslo Opera House during a concert recital, with soprano Lise Davidsen and conductor James Gaffigan

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THE *Hot* LIST

Few sensations can be more rewarding for true opera lovers than the jaw-dropping sense of wonder on encountering an extraordinary new singer—a sure-fire future star whose qualities shine through in spite of their youth and inexperience. Being in the presence of a beautiful, engaging and *individual* voice combined with stage charisma produces an instant, exhilarating adrenaline rush. And when this artist's subsequent performances justify the predictions of a promising future, a lasting bond is formed that keeps you interested in their progress and success throughout their career.

Two years of Covid have been especially tough on emerging young talent—especially for singers who were on the cusp of an international career before being thwarted by cancellation after cancellation. Throughout the pandemic, *Opera Now's* correspondents have kept listening whenever they could for voices that will shape a brave new future of opera on the stages of the world in the years to come.

The 20 artists chosen below by a panel of critics and experts are mostly under the age of 40 and at a pivotal point in their careers. These singers provide just a snapshot of the huge reserves of young talent in the opera world. Plenty more will step into the spotlight in future issues of *Opera Now*, but for now, we highlight singers who have started to deliver on the promise of a great future, and who have caught our imaginations and fired our spirits in recent months.

SEOKJONG BAEK

Tenor

SeokJong Baek is an exciting young lirico-spinto tenor from South Korea who took third prize in this year's Tenor Viñas competition held at the Liceu Theatre, the latest in a swathe of prizes that have been showered on this innately gifted young singer. The audience in Barcelona adored him. Trained in Canada and the US (including a stint at the Aspen Opera Center), he has started to make a name for himself in Europe, where his generous, warm, heroic tenor has already caught the ear of Peter Mario Katona, casting director at the Royal Opera House. Having heard him on three occasions, the vocal connoisseur concluded: 'Radamès, Calaf... Watch the name. He will soon be known.'

CORNELIA BESKOW

Soprano

Swedish dramatic soprano in-the-making Cornelia Beskow was on the brink of great things before



MILLERROON

Cornelia Beskow



Nicolai Elsberg



Seok Jong Baek

Covid struck, so it is heartening to see a performer with such potential picking up where she left off with appearances in the title role of *Jenůfa* at the Norwegian Opera this Spring, not long after she sang Sieglinde at the Royal Swedish Opera. In her voice's sheer presence and tonal lustre, there are shades of Beskow's Royal Danish Opera Academy classmate, the already stellar Lise Davidsen.

NICOLAI ELSBERG

Bass

Talent spotters may already have caught sight and sound of Nicolai Elsberg, a Danish basso profundo who in 2021 represented his country at both Cardiff Singer of the World and Operalia in Moscow. He has swept the board of opera prizes at home in Denmark, where in 2020 he joined the ensemble of the Royal Danish Opera. His voice has extraordinary presence. And as the former frontman of a Danish pop group, he knows how to hold a stage.

GEORG FESTL

Bass Baritone

Georg Festl is a German singer who has been steadily honing his skills as part of the soloists ensemble at the opera company in Darmstadt. He was stepping into the limelight just as the pandemic landed, singing the immensely difficult role of Saint François d'Assise in Messiaen's opera. His portrayal created a furore in the German press and his success with audiences was so enormous that further performances had to be added to the run. Since 2020 he has been under contract to Decca Records and an international career now beckons.

RAFAEL FINGERLOS

Baritone

Austrian-born Rafael Fingerlos has been making a name for himself in the German-speaking opera world, with stage appearances at the Salzburg Festival, in Dresden and at the Vienna State Opera. He is also an advocate of the Lieder repertoire, and made a deep impression on song-loving audiences at the Schubertiade in Vorarlberg. His recent CD *Mozart Made in Salzburg* (Solo Musica 377) is proof that he belongs to the top class of Mozart interpreters. In an exuberant declaration of love to Mozart's native city, he claims that Salzburg has formed him and will always spur him to give his best.

SAMUEL HASSELHORN

Baritone

Samuel Hasselhorn's two CDs of Schumann songs have already given this young singer a place in the Olympian heights of Lieder singing. His most recent CD, *Stille Liebe* (Harmonia Mundi 916114), shows a velvety, exquisitely warm, mellifluous baritone. He had the interesting idea of presenting the 16

Schumann settings of Heine poems in *Dichterliebe* alongside settings of the same texts by other composers, including Wolf, Liszt and Grieg (gwk records 141). He is also making a steady conquest of Europe's opera stages: after two seasons as a member of the Vienna State Opera ensemble, he is now heading for *Pelléas* (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) in Nuremberg, *Guglielmo* (*Così fan tutte*) in Lisbon and *Harlekin* (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) at La Scala Milan. >



Top to bottom:
Georg Festl;
Rafael Fingerlos;
Samuel Hasselhorn



Vocal Highlights



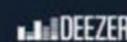
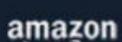
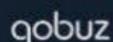
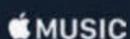
PTC 5186 872

Ian Bostridge and Saskia Giorgini present a programme of rarely-recorded songs by Respighi.



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Magdalena Kožená presents Bartók's *Village Scenes*, Mussorgsky's *The Nursery* and a selection of Brahms songs, together with acclaimed pianist Yefim Bronfman.



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CATRIONA HEWITSON

Soprano

Catriona Hewitson is a Scottish singer who is going places. The soprano won the 2018 Kathleen Ferrier Loveday Song Prize and is currently a Scottish Opera Emerging Artist in the company's 2020/21 season. She delivered a feisty performance as the King of Barataria's daughter Casilda – complete with eye-patch – in Scottish Opera's *The Gondoliers* last year and she makes her debut in the role of Tytania in the company's new production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which opened in February and has performances in Edinburgh this month. An international career is sure to lie ahead.



JULIE HOWDEN

SUMI HWANG

Soprano

After reaching hundreds of millions of viewers when she sang the Olympic Anthem at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics in South Korea in 2018, Sumi Hwang embraced a more traditional operatic path by joining the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden in Germany. Numerous cancelled performances held her back in 2021, but all eyes are on this promising and engaging young singer as she resumes her operatic ascent this year, when she will focus on the main Mozart opera soprano roles.



BUMJOO KIM

Tenor

South Korean tenor Bumjoo Kim was off to a fairly slow career start in the midst of the pandemic, but he has impressed audiences in Europe and Asia with his distinctive tenor. He displayed an electric stage presence in the compact *Carmen* staged by the More than Musical opera company in Hong Kong, where he stole the show as a Don José whose singing could have graced any international stage.



GIHOON KIM

Baritone

Gihoon Kim's international career is just getting started, after winning BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2021. This promising young baritone is wisely taking his time, building his repertory and honing his sonorous and smooth voice. He will give his US debut this year as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* at the San Diego Opera, and has performances lined up for Bavarian State Opera and Covent Garden. >

Top to bottom:
Catriona Hewitson;
Sumi Hwang;
Gihoon Kim

HEALIN KWON



MAREN ULENCH

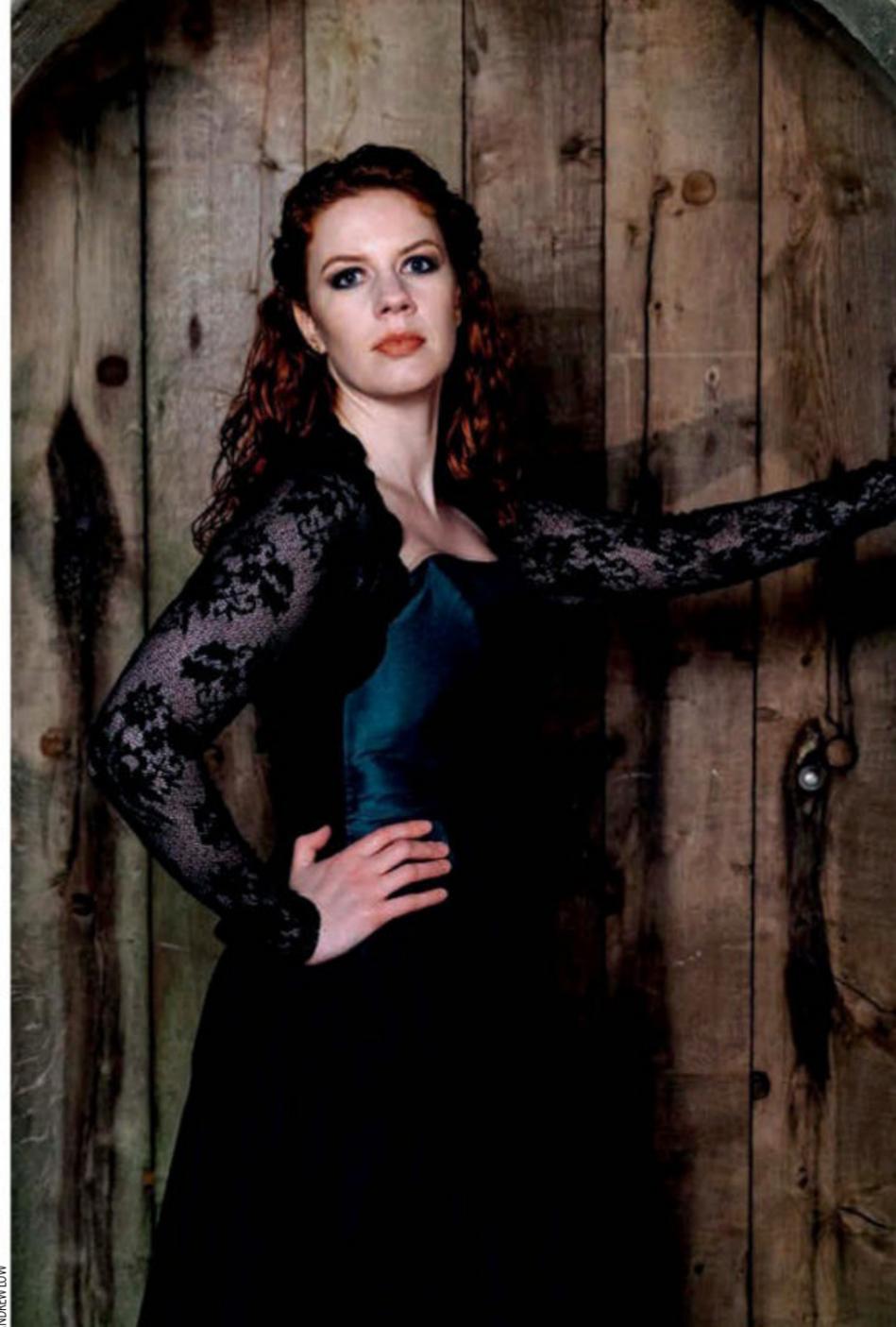
Clockwise from above:
Konstantin Krimmel;
Catriona Morison; Anna
Lucia Richter; Timos
Sirlantzis, Long Long

KONSTANTIN KRIMMEL
Baritone

Having received great acclaim as a Lieder singer, Konstantin Krimmel has opened a new chapter in his operatic career: since 2021 he has been a member of the Bayerische Staatsoper, where he can be seen this season in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* and in Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Important Mozart roles await him in the next few years. His Lieder recitals are always a singular event as he infuses the song repertoire with an extraordinary energy and life. His first CD *Saga* (Alpha 9453750), with ballads of Loewe, Schumann and Schubert, has enormous interpretative depth and received unanimous critical approval.

LONG LONG
Tenor

Chinese tenor Long Long burnished his academic preparation from Shanghai and Beijing by joining the Opera Studio of the Bavarian State Opera and then becoming an ensemble member of the opera company in Hanover. His base in Germany proved the perfect springboard to gobble up numerous awards at European competitions before conquering jury and audience of the influential Bertelsmann Stiftung Neue Stimmen in 2019. His career has



ANDREW LLOYD

proved unstoppable by any pandemic: he showed off his talent as the Duke of Mantua at last summer's Bregenz Festival *Rigoletto*. This year he is scheduled to sing leading roles in Frankfurt and Hanover and will portray Rodolfo in *La bohème* at Glyndebourne.

CATRIONA MORISON
Mezzo Soprano

Catriona Morison's career has been something of a slow burn since she won the main prize at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition in 2017 – the first Brit to do so – and was joint winner of the Song Prize. In the following year, she appeared as Charlotte in Massenet's *Werther* for Bergen National Opera. With her warm, richly textured voice, Morison dug deep to put real flesh on the bones on her character. Her two-year stint with the Oper Wuppertal ensemble in Germany served her well, as was evident in the 2021 Edinburgh International Festival's semi-staged *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Morison made the role of The Composer her own in this commanding and electrifying interpretation. Now that opera houses are opening up there will hopefully at last be more opportunities to experience Morison's formidable talent.

JANNES FRUEBEL



KAUFPOKINGAS

ANNA LUCIA RICHTER

Mezzo soprano

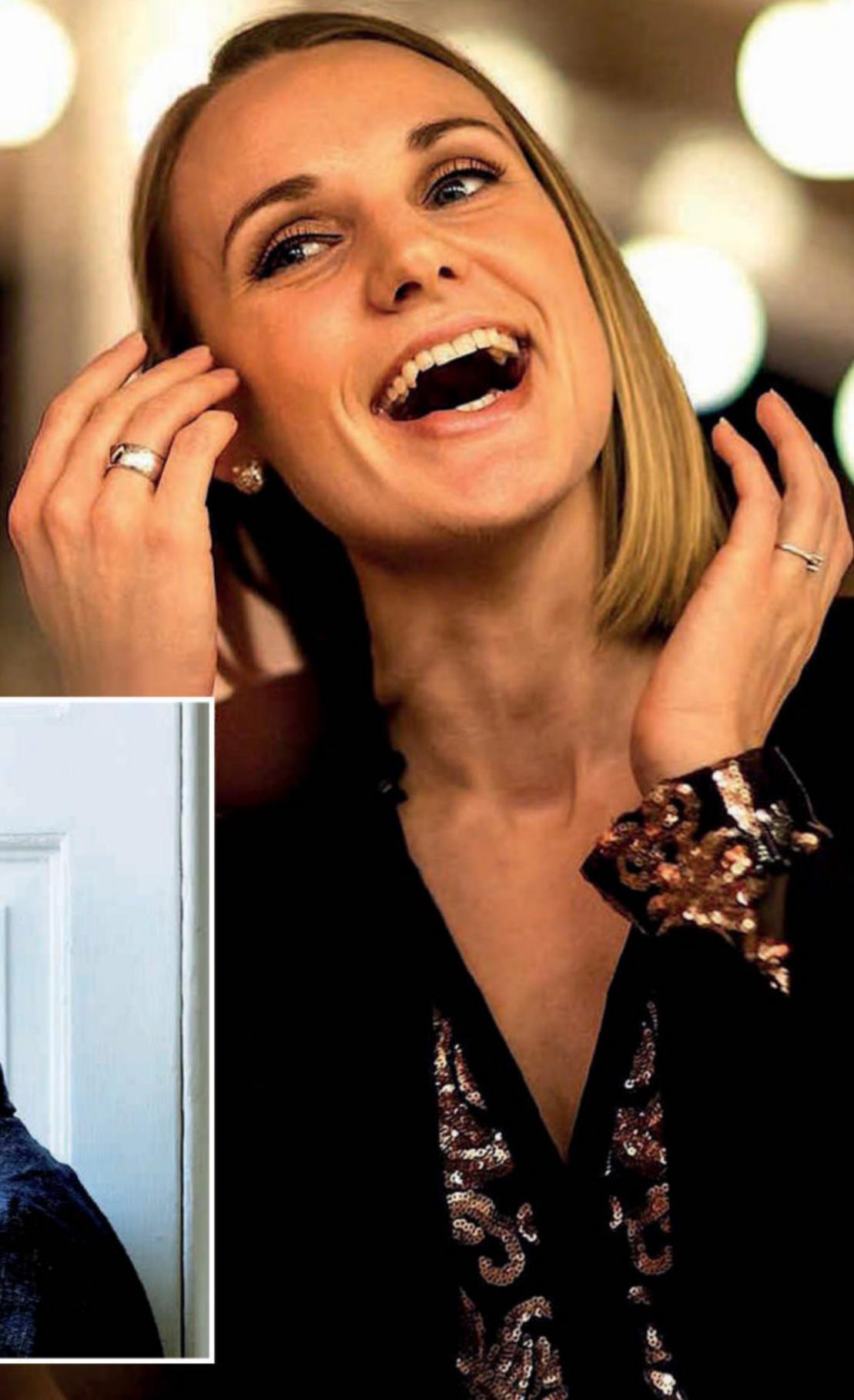
All those who have heard the wonderful, impeccable soprano of Anna Lucia Richter in Mahler's Fourth Symphony (with Gergiev) or have seen her in Handel's *Semele* will be amazed that she has now changed to a mezzo. Her new CD *Il delirio della passione* (Pentatone PTC5186845), with music by Monteverdi in her new voice category, is particularly pleasing to the ear, as in every bar her deep love for this repertoire becomes obvious. However you categorise her voice, her clear, bright tone, full of colours, remains a constant. In Cologne she sang the role of Hansel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) over Christmas and in Munich and Madrid this season she will give Lieder recitals together with Christian Gerhaher.



TIMOS SIRLANTZIS

Bass Baritone

Greek bass-baritone Timos Sirlantzis is blessed with a richly coloured voice infused with a warm, pleasing timbre and an already excellent technique. Having sung Papageno in Barrie Kosky's genius production of *Die Zauberflöte* in Berlin, he is now a member of the team at the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich where, having cut his teeth on the small roles of Angelotti, Basilio and Monterone, he is due to sing his first Leporello. >



Above: Caroline Wettergreen
Inset: Adam Smith

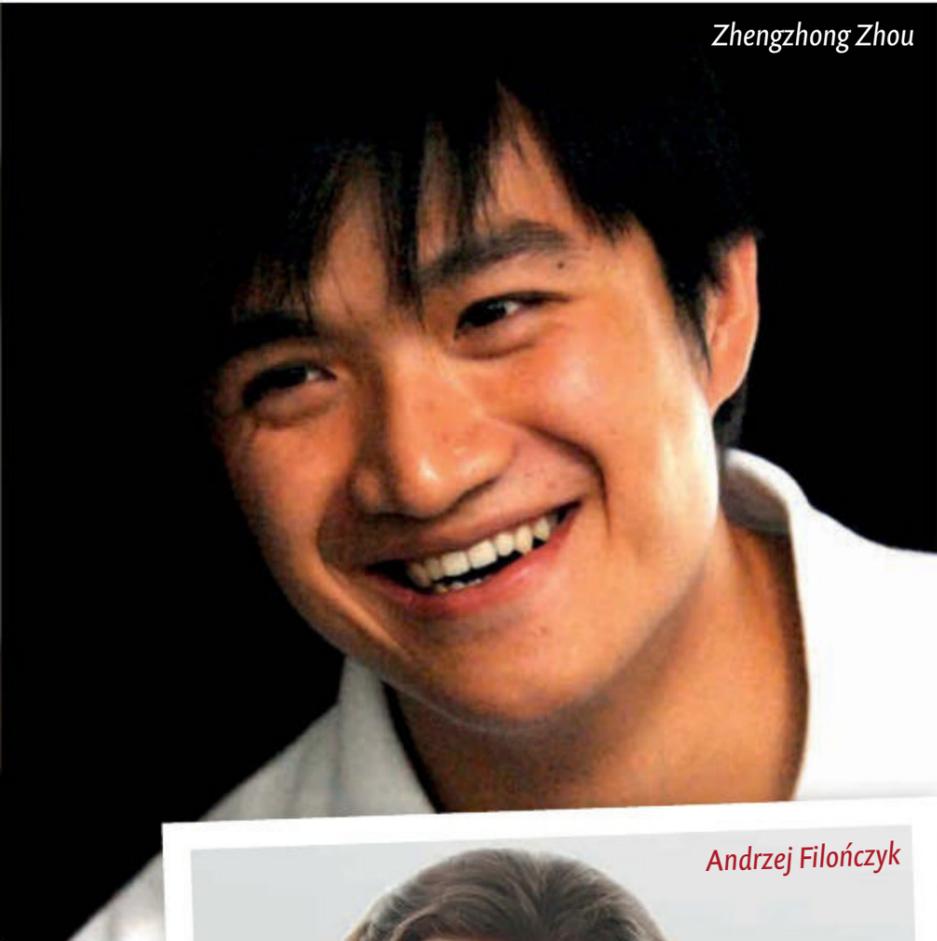
ADAM SMITH
Tenor

Last autumn on Glyndebourne's annual tour, Adam Smith showed the vocal wherewithal and confidence to take on the mighty challenge of Florestan in *Fidelio*. He gave a noble and moving performance of this punishing role, with a voice that overflows with dramatic conviction and heroic impact. The months ahead see him making his debut at La Monnaie in Brussels in Puccini's *Il tabarro* and as Don José at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in the USA. Look out for a major new British tenor on the international scene.

CAROLINE WETTERGREEN
Soprano

Norwegian singer Caroline Wettergreen has proved constantly impressive in recent years, bringing her fresh, pinpoint coloratura to some of the world's major stages including Glyndebourne and the Bavarian State Opera. She appeared as the Princess in Hans Abrahamsen's *The Snow Queen* in which she sounded as fearless as she did heartfelt – qualities she seems to possess across the board. In May this year she sings the Queen of the Night for the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto.

Zhengzhong Zhou



Andrzej Filończyk



ZHENGZHONG ZHOU

Baritone

Covid disrupted the careers of all performing artists. But emerging Asian opera singers, especially those who were resident in their home countries, had a particularly challenging time of it, with the region experiencing some of the world's toughest lockdowns and strictest quarantine policies.

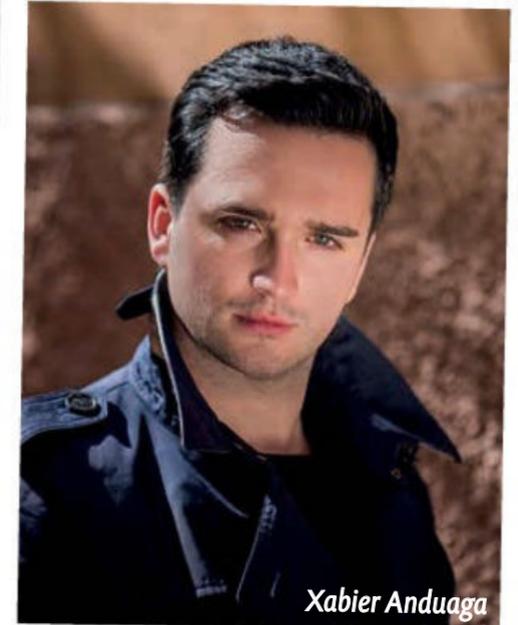
Zhengzhong Zhou one day found himself and his family locked down at his home in Wuhan in an ordeal that would last well over two months. A former member of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme and the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the charismatic singer used the lockdown to focus on his family, exercise and prepare for new roles. Post lockdown he has resumed teaching at the Wuhan Conservatory and performed in the Chinese premiere of *The Rake's Progress*. A return to the international stage is overdue. **ON**

Casting the net

There are several singers I have been watching and following closely over the past three or four years, though of course Covid has made it more difficult to keep track. Normally I would always try to hear singers from the American, Russian, Central European and the Italian markets. I listen out for young singers from conservatoires who are setting out on first steps into a career, or from a Young Artist Programme who have interesting potential.

I make sure I hear them over and over again for two or three years in a row, watching how they develop. There are some young people, like **Pene Pati** for example, who just sang Edgardo in *Lucia* last week in the San Carlo opera house in Naples, who I think has great potential. There's also a very good baritone from Poland, **Andrzej Filończyk**, whom I like very much. I've got five or six people in my sights at the moment who, while still very young, have the capacity to do something very big in the next few years: **Xabier Anduaga**, the Spanish tenor, is one of these. I really appreciate the colour of his voice, which is a very, very important instrument. These are the artists who I've been following and consider to have real promise for a major career.

Ilias Tzempetonidis, casting director, Teatro San Carlo, Naples



Xabier Anduaga

ELENA CHERKASHINA

Pene Pati





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How a *star* is made

By **Helena Matheopoulos**

‘It is a sacred privilege to be born with a sound. One should treat a vocal instrument like a growing tree, giving it water, support and anything else needed in order to develop healthily’
– *Eugenia Kemeny (1893-1969) Singing teacher at the Barcelona Conservatoire*

Key to the emergence, formation and development of a promising young singer is having the right mentor at the right moment – preferable from the very start.

Great singing often starts with great teaching, and one of the best teachers any singer was ever lucky enough to come across was Eugenia Kemeny, a former champion swimmer in her native Hungary, whose method was based on developing a uniquely solid breathing technique.

Kemeny was responsible for the phenomenal vocal prowess and long career of Montserrat Caballé. The necessity of building a first-rate breathing technique should be the crucial, number one priority in the teaching of singing, before anything else. But tragically, it is inadequately taught at the classes of many teachers and institutions worldwide. It is therefore worth quoting, for all young singers’ benefit, Caballé’s detailed description of her visionary teacher’s method:

‘Our class spent the entire first year at the conservatoire learning how to breathe: constantly doing what she referred to as ‘respiratory gymnastics’:

a technique based on the theory that singers must build the support necessary for guiding and controlling the passage of air through the body to the larynx.

‘She explained that if we succeeded in developing a firm, solid wall around the diaphragm, this would protect and allow it maximum expansion, like that of underwater swimmers, and would also enable us to regulate the air intake without any contraction in the throat. She never talked about voice placement, because she believed that if the throat stayed relaxed and untensed, the sound would automatically be placed correctly.’

Many students thought Kemeny was crazy and complained that her class was more like a session at the gym than a singing lesson, Caballé found the theory interesting and ‘based my whole career on it’. Gradually, people realised that this revolutionary method in the teaching of singing had a lot going for it and began to flock to Kemeny’s class. She promised that it was guaranteed to prolong a career by at least a decade and prevent a wobble which, she stressed, ‘has nothing to do with the vocal cords but with the muscles becoming loose’.

Jonathan Papp in a coaching session with baritone Grisha Martirosyan at the Mascarade Opera Studio in Florence

Incidentally, Joan Sutherland, whose vocal longevity was also phenomenal, also stated that if she felt *any* sensation in the throat, this meant that she was singing badly or singing the wrong role.

Once a young singer has mastered and developed this foundation to all good singing – adapted, of course, to their own particular body, which is as unique as their vocal instrument – then the process of opening up their talent and developing their overall artistic personality begins.

Finding the right teacher is the single most important feature in a singer's life and, of course, luck plays a part. Recommendation is not enough, because even a good teacher is not necessarily good for everyone. 'A good teacher-student relationship is based on mutual understanding. On the teacher's side this understanding should extend to the singer's character as much as to their voice,' stressed the late, legendary voice teacher, Vera Rozsa, without whom Dame Kiri Te Kanawa states that she 'would never have had the ability, the knowledge or the oomph to go out and do what I did... some days I would turn up at Vera's feeling ghastly and moribund, but, true to her

'Developing young voices requires a marked perceptiveness, musical imagination and extreme sensitivity, because the danger of destroying or seriously harming a budding talent is very great'

promise to "make you feel wonderful in two minutes", she managed to cheer and invigorate me in no time.'

Developing young talent requires not only such passionate love for the voice and singers, but also a marked perceptiveness, musical imagination and extreme sensitivity, because the danger of destroying or seriously harming a budding talent is very great. Even famous singers, whose masterclasses are considered major events and brim with eager young singers avid for tips and pearls of advice can, on occasion, do more harm than good if the 'star' in question lacks these qualities.

Renée Fleming emerged from a masterclass with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf with her confidence in tatters and returned home to the States totally dispirited. Were it not for her new teacher, Beverly Johnson, who understood that, before this particular pupil could fulfil her musical potential, she would have to sort out her psychological problems and had the foresight to send her to a therapist, we would have been deprived of one of the greatest singers of our day...

In *Opera Now's* cover feature in the January 2022 issue, the young South African soprano Pretty Yende stated that no fewer than two top sopranos at the school of La Scala nearly ruined her confidence and

will to go on with her career. It was only when the theatre's then casting director, Ilias Tzempetonidis, sent her to Mariella Devia she was able to regain her confidence and will to go on. Tzempetonidis, who is currently casting director at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, explains how he sets about identifying and nurturing young talent later in this feature.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we have exceptional coaches, such as Jonathan Papp and Mark Wildman, former head of the singing faculty at the Royal Academy of Music, whose perceptive musical imagination diagnosed the real vocal potential of our cover star, Freddie De Tommaso, convincing him to switch from the baritone to the tenor repertoire.

After a young singer emerges from their training, hopefully properly equipped and ready to launch themselves into a career, the next crucial step is the judicious choice of agent. This is not always easy, especially after winning at one of the top international singing competitions such as Plácido Domingo's Operalia, The Belvedere, the Viñas in Barcelona or the Metropolitan Opera's Young Artists Auditions. Winning such events means that an artist suddenly becomes flavour of the month, besieged by a plethora of offers from agents, casting directors and impresarios, some truly knowledgeable and conscientious, others eager to cash in on success and promising the earth right away.

One of the best ever casting directors was Matthew Epstein, who retired in December 2020 after a distinguished and outspoken international career discovering and nurturing young operatic talent. His knowledge and understanding of the voice remain legendary, built on the philosophy that young singers have to know themselves in order to achieve their potential. 'An artist who sits back and waits for somebody else to figure everything out is not going to make it,' he says. 'At no time when I was working with von Stade or Ramey or Malfitano or Battle was I dealing with people who didn't have their own ideas. Renée Fleming had her own ideas. Susan Graham certainly did. You have to be chairman of your own board.'

On the other hand, artists, Epstein says, should be willing to listen to advice and wait until they are vocally ready for each of the parts which they might eventually become famous for: 'I kept trying to make singers understand that it not in the first five years of their career that the money is made – it's in the *last ten* years. Their aim should be vocal longevity, to be singing 30 or even 40 years after the onset of their career; Like Leontyne Price, Christa Ludwig, Leonie Rysanek, Birgit Nilsson, Carlo Bergonzi, Joan Sutherland and Montserrat Caballé, to say nothing of Plácido Domingo, who all sustained great careers for decades! That's what a career is supposed to be about – not cashing in fast! Because the end of your career is when you can bring your whole life experience and consummate artistry to your work.' **ON**

Opening doors to new talent

Transforming an innate talent for singing into a sustained and successful career on the world stage is one of the most elusive but also rewarding aspects of opera. We invited some of the best talent-spotters in the business to give us some insights into the choices they make in opening doors for the great singers of the future

PETER KATONA

Peter Katona has been casting director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, since 1983. During that time he has ‘discovered’ some of opera’s most illustrious names, including Júlia Várady, Angela Gheorghiu and Anne Sophie von Otter

What particularly spurs me on when auditioning a singer or attending a vocal competition is the excitement of hearing singing at a very special level – not just the fine and successful singers that we all know and love, but the sudden, unexpected discovery of something truly new and extraordinary.

In my earliest years, more than 50 years ago, this happened when in a small opera house in Romania I heard the very young Júlia Várady singing Fenena in *Nabucco*. Never ever have I heard the prayer in the last act sung with such ease and magic again. She then came to Frankfurt, sort of from nowhere, and started her wonderful career.

In the same years I heard the very young Eva Martón singing Freia in *Das Rheingold* at Budapest State Opera. She stood out in what was a pretty good cast then, and again I was lucky enough to be the one who helped her getting ‘out into the world’.

Ever since have I been looking for that kind of discovery with open ears and eyes. It takes a combination of instinct and experience, driven by an early love of the voice and its effect on the mind and soul...

At Covent Garden I found myself auditioning young singers who had no known or established background, but who metaphorically hit me quite suddenly and with overwhelming power. One day, the young Anne Sofie von Otter appeared in our chorus room at Covent Garden and there was no doubt that I had to engage her as soon as possible. A few years later, in 1991, shortly after her graduation from the Bucharest Music Academy, the very young Angela Gheorghiu turned up with a voice of miraculous and individual beauty. She was a singer with exceptional control over her voice despite her young age – only 26 at the time – with charm and everything just right: every note, nuance, accent and colour absolutely *perfect*. It was instantly clear to me that here was a voice ready for a career right away... the rest is history!



The same happened with Freddie De Tommaso, when he won the Viñas competition in Barcelona in 2018. Or Aigul Akhmetshina, who applied to our Young Artists programme a few years ago, at the incredibly young age of 22, and has been conquering world stages since.

Cluj in Romania played a major role in my life since it was the hometown of my father, the Hungarian baritone Julius Katona. Going back to the small theatre there three years ago, I heard a very messy orchestral rehearsal of *Tosca* in an impossible space, but suddenly one voice in the small role of the Sacristan stood out and stunned me instantly – it was the young bass Alexander Köpeczi. It was quite extraordinary and totally unexpected. I just helped him with one or two small steps and now he is well on the way in his career, following in the footsteps of Júlia Várady, the singer who started my little role in opera’s history...

Of course, these are just a few snapshots that come to mind after a career spanning many decades. The joy of discovering the most special new talent at the very beginning of their careers remains perhaps the most rewarding, humbling privilege in my profession.

Peter Katona: ‘Casting takes a combination of instinct and experience, driven by a love of the voice and its effect on the mind and soul...’



Jonathan Papp in a coaching session with Hyesang Park and Rodrigo de Vera

JONATHAN PAPP

Jonathan Papp is one of the founders and co-directors of the Georg Solti Accademia. Each year, a group of young singers is selected by audition to participate in the GSA's summer school in Tuscany, an immersive course of training in bel canto singing that includes coaching by some of the greatest names in this field

Holding auditions for the Georg Solti Accademia (GSA) is a highlight in my year – an opportunity to discover new, exciting talent. The auditioning panel looks for a variety of factors in our successful applicants, but for me, the voice has to be appropriate for the bel canto repertoire that we teach, and it must have a quality that engages me and moves me. It should be compelling and make me sit up and listen.

What do I especially look out for? An intrinsic ability to perform – which is quite different from a good auditioning technique. It isn't about overt histrionics. For instance, I sometimes get auditioning sopranos bringing a little book to use for Norina's Act I aria from *Don Pasquale*. If you think you need a prop like that to get your aria over, then think again about this job.

Mistakes in language and even technique are remediable, and if I hear the potential in a young singer that merits the time and investment that the GSA can make in them, then they will have a place on the course, and a team truly devoted to helping them. The courses are fully funded every step of the way, which means that none of our singers has to worry about a lack of money to attend.

GSA is a very nurturing space for young singers and pianists. The course we run for répétiteurs in Venice is dedicated to giving a new generation of coaches

and conductors deep insights into the operatic voice. It is all about the bel canto style of singing, which is fundamental to *all* good singing, in any language. All the faculty, singers or coaches, 'sing' from the same hymn sheet. This makes for a very consistent and powerful approach, and it's one that has been reinforced by all our visiting stars and faculty who subscribe to this completely. Importantly, however, there is no 'one size fits all' approach. You have to adapt your teaching to each individual: communication of ideas and information is key.

It's so important for all of us to pass on our knowledge generously to the next generation. Among our regular faculty, Richard Bonyngé provides the ultimate lesson for bel canto style and his subtle conducting speaks volumes. Soprano Barbara Frittoli is the safest, skilled, and most experienced set of hands to help any singer. When she demonstrates, she is immediately in character – vocally and dramatically. She is astonishing.

One of the keys to GSA's success has been the extraordinary language coaching that we enjoy. Originally this was provided by Corradina Caporello, whose work inspired me to set up this programme, and now her protégé, Stefano Baldasseroni. Correct pronunciation leads to a placement of the voice which can be as liberating as any singing lesson. Probably even more so, as the intention of the text leads the music.

Caring for the singers is paramount: they are vocal athletes, expected to turn out the goods at a level that's recognised as 'top', no matter how they feel. Downtime to process information is so important. No singer who is tired or unable to sing is bullied into taking their session, even if it's their sole opportunity. Why would you? There will be situations where financial constraints in later life will perhaps make you push yourself, with potential injury, just to help out a house or to make that fee. But don't do it now!

The two concerts that conclude the three-week programme provide a final focus and opportunity to try things out. However, they are not the main point of the course; it is about the 'safe' education, preparation, and enrichment that the programme can give over an immersive stay of three weeks in Italy. This includes the extraordinary bond between participants at every level that is developed during the course. The GSA exists as an extended family and always endeavours to help our alumni beyond the three weeks of the course.

I still enjoy a mixture of levels taking part, and the less experienced are always buoyed up by the more experienced. Recent participants include soprano Hyesang Park, who always cites a moment when she lay on her front to sing, establishing an understanding of support that changed her way of singing. Aigul Akhmetshina concentrated on her language and brilliant coloratura, while Freddie

De Tommaso credits GSA with his legato singing, *fraseggio*, use of breath, focusing of the sound, and ‘many other essentials of singing’.

Hallmarks of bel canto include a constant and regulated air flow (support of the sound), the shaping and intention of each sentence and phrase, and how that in turn then influences the decorations and ornamentation. These are not new thoughts, but they are not always fundamental to the singing that is so often heard today, and they give that illusive gift of longevity to the artist.

The pleasure that each of us takes in watching the singers’ development throughout the course, and our joy in watching them ‘fly’ in subsequent years is in large part why we do this. We always look forward to reconnecting with them, whether to listen, help, and advise still further, or just to sit back and relish their performances on some of the world’s major stages.

ILIAS TZEMPETONIDIS

Ilias Tzempetonidis is one of the most experienced and influential casting directors in the business, having worked at La Scala, Paris Opera and now at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, where he is building a formidable roster of artists who are transforming the artistic reputation of the house

When it comes to casting, for me the first crucial thing is to see if there is an instrument with a unique colour, a distinctive quality and a capacity to develop in future years. These are the attributes of young singers with a potential to create something important in the opera world. Charisma – the ability to seduce and captivate the audience – is also crucial. And fundamental for me is their personality when they are *not* in front of an audience.

The public likes to see big personalities, performers who will captivate the imagination from the moment they walk on stage. Of course, the ability to communicate well is very important, both in terms of the public and the press. And you also need to be able to deal with people who work in the theatre. Not all singers are comfortable with casting directors, conductors and stage directors. Singing is an extremely difficult profession and really requires singers to give everything, dedicating themselves to the rigours of study while having the capacity to survive the rough-and-tumble of theatrical life.

With experience in this job, you develop ears with a sixth sense, so that when your instincts are pricked by an unknown artist, you can dare to open up opportunities to perform on your stage, naturally in the right role, surrounded by the right singers, conducted by the right maestro and in the right production.

When I come across a rough diamond, first I try to get to know them better and understand how intelligent and how disposed they are to accepting what I propose, as far as roles are concerned and also

whom I suggest they should study with, and how I envisage the development of their voice and the roles they will sing. It’s crucial that they understand all this, are willing to work hard and give their best non-stop. They also need to accept criticism. If I find all this in a young artist, I immediately invest all my time and power to assist and help by giving them the right roles and by making a three-year plan. Though you always have to be open to change it if ‘The Voice’ – not always a predictable character in this story – goes another way.

Another source of new talent for me is in the world of competitions, which offer the opportunity to hear a wide range of talent from a range of backgrounds. However, in all the juries I’ve been on through my career, very often we are confronted by a recurring and serious problem: most of the participants sing the wrong arias – something that is far too difficult or vocally unsuitable at this stage in their careers. Even then, our job is to look beyond these poor choices of repertoire, and understand whether here we have an artist we can invest in or not.

So, the number one crucial thing for a singer hoping to catch the ear of a casting director is to be very well prepared and secure in themselves; to present themselves with confidence and to sing the right thing for their age and state of their vocal development. ➤

*Ilias Tzempetonidis:
‘Singing is an extremely
difficult profession and
really requires singers to
give everything’*



LUCIANO ROMANO/TEATRO SAN CARLO

Soprano Barbara Frittoli: 'When she demonstrates, she is immediately in character – vocally and dramatically. She is astonishing'

RODERICK WILLIAMS

Roderick Williams is one of the finest baritones among the current generation of acclaimed British singers. Alongside a busy career on the concert platform, recording studio and in opera, he is a distinguished voice teacher, frequently giving masterclasses both in conservatoires and in public settings

A beautiful voice is important of course, but more than that, I have to *believe* in a singer. If someone can communicate with me, move me as one human being to another, then I am completely in their power. How this can be achieved in practical terms is less easy to define but I think we are all aware of it at a very basic, profound level when it happens.

People like me who spend time visiting schools and conservatoires of music, working with younger singers, would probably like to suggest that this act of honest communication can be taught, nurtured and encouraged. In reality, however, I find that not everyone is able to access this level. The brightest stars of the singing world, to whom we are all drawn, would seem to have something special, something nebulous known only to a select few. The very idea that popular TV shows such as *The X Factor* exist would seem to indicate that there is a mysterious, almost random nature to the notion of talent, and also that it can be discovered almost anywhere.

Nurturing a voice can take a great deal of time and trust (and also money). There are some pitfalls that could be avoided; for example, singing too much too soon, accepting opportunities that may seem

attractive in the short term but risk the development of a lengthy career (if that is the goal). But it also depends on what the end goal is. A brief and glittering career might be just right for some people; who is to say the shape of their life is dictated by their singing? There are many paths through a singing career and one person's idea of success is often different from another's.

I would love to say that having a beautiful and remarkable

Roderick Williams: 'Nurturing a voice takes time, trust (and money!)



voice is an essential requirement for a successful career. I have, though, noted some singers who have crafted solid careers through sheer hard work, without the natural beauty in their sound of some of their colleagues. This self-knowledge has proved for them to be a valuable asset. Learning how to keep that voice healthy, functioning, easy and flexible is also important. Also learning how to look after your voice when it is not working so well is handy too. Each individual singer has their own merits. Therefore I am careful to avoid the word 'essential' when it comes to listing qualities a singer should have, because some artists might enjoy wonderful careers without such so-called 'essential' qualities.

Communication, however, is vital for a career in singing. With an audience, of course, but also with the professional world – in other words 'networking'. You have to cultivate a reputation within the profession as being a reliable colleague and a secure musician. The internet and social media has revolutionised the way in which artists can interact with the people who, in the end, will be paying to see them perform. It's a whole new world out there.

Competitions can be very useful, but I would suggest to any singer not to place all their faith in competitions. Does there exist, I wonder, a plane in which one can care just enough about a competition to give of one's best but not enough to be affected either by success or failure?

I remember being told when I started out in this career that a singer's life was hugely precarious and offered little or no stability in comparison to a conventional office job. While this may be true in some respects, conventional office jobs, as my generation knew them, don't seem to exist in the same way today. Some friends and relatives of mine have worked for established companies all their lives, only to be made redundant out of the blue. Perhaps now singing is no more or less precarious than any other profession.

I can say that I still derive an enormous amount of pleasure from the work that I do and, unlike many jobs, I am often applauded at the end of it. So my advice to young singers would still be to pursue this career if they have the talent, dedication and courage. **ON**



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The best *medicine*

By Benjamin Ivry

The young German soprano Theresa Pisl has taken an unconventional approach to her singing career, studying medicine in tandem with developing her voice in repertoire that ranges from traditional Lieder to a provocative exploration of the sensuality of singing



ALFRED UR QUONUNDSOOTTR

‘Is there a doctor in the house?’ Well, if you’re at a performance featuring Theresa Pilsl, the answer would have to be yes. In addition to her growing following as a singer, the young Bavarian-born soprano is a qualified physician. She completed her residency at The Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, one of Europe’s major teaching hospitals, where she interned at the Audiology and Phoniatics Department, treating ear diseases as well as hearing, balance, voice and speech issues.

Her medical training has given her some serious insights into the workings of the voice, but she has recently been exploring the lighter side of singing in the Munich Chamber Opera production of *Charley’s Aunt*, an operetta about good old British transvestism, based on the farce by Brandon Thomas, as arranged in 2014 by Alexander Krampe to tunes by the light music composer Ernst Fischer.

At a recital in Berlin’s Pierre Boulez Saal, she was more in a more sombre mood, moving an audience to tears by interweaving songs by Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Fanny Hensel. Hartmut Höll, dean of collaborative pianists, who performed with her on that occasion, describes Pilsl as ‘sensitive and smart’.

Pilsl herself recalls that during rehearsals, Höll advised her to ‘sing as if it were the last time and don’t spare anything for next time. That’s how I want to sing, with my whole heart, to go for it and forget what happens.’ Audiences heard this go-for-broke approach at her broadcast concert of Mozart arias last November with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie. Mozart has long been her ideal operatic composer, and she currently sees Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* as her ‘dream role; it seems as if it were written for my throat. Susanna is exactly me at the moment; that’s what I should, and want to, sing.’

When she was just 17, she was already performing the role of Marcellina in *Figaro* at the Fürstbischöflichen Opernhaus in Passau, near the village where she was born. Her medical studies limited her availability for time-consuming opera commitments, but served as a refuge from the rigours of studying opera at German conservatories.

Pilsl describes the coping mechanism: ‘I was always very interested in medicine, but during my vocal studies I realised that pressures in the singing industry took away the freeness of my artistry and the fun I used to have.’ After she branched out to medicine, singing recovered its status as her ‘biggest pleasure’. Pilsl cautions: ‘This approach works for me; I don’t necessarily recommend it for others. But I think it helps to do things other than singing, to open up your horizons to what’s happening in the world.’

She adds: ‘At German conservatories, to find people who really know how to coach a voice, students are almost required to go privately and are not allowed to inform their official professors. In Germany, people

‘At German conservatories, to find people who really know how to coach a voice, students are almost required to go privately and are not allowed to inform their official professors’

are hired for professorships because they had great singing careers, but maybe don’t know how to teach.’

Currently she is pleased with the vocal advice she is receiving from one Berlin coach, Sami Kustaloglu, whose website proudly proclaims: ‘Bel canto is dead/ long live bel canto!’ Pilsl explains that Kustaloglu means that he ‘teaches in a bel canto tradition, but in a very modern and functional way.’

She is also working with the American soprano Abbie Furmansky, a longtime ensemble member at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Staatstheater Mainz.

With these mentors, Pilsl has prepared future roles, including those written by modern and contemporary composers. She has already performed in *White Rose*, a one-act chamber opera by Udo Zimmermann about young anti-Nazi resistants and in Viktor Ullmann’s melodrama *The Way of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke*, written in the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

She also filmed a provocative improvisation with the accompanist Daniel Gerzenberg, expanding Schubert’s song *The Fisherman’s Luck in Love*. The resulting performance piece, which can be seen on YouTube (shorturl.at/crxKO), was suggestively entitled *Lied Me! | Porn Song* and presented by the International Song Center Heidelberg as an invitation for punters to ‘surrender to sensuality’.

It’s a curious mixture of refinement and unfettered emotion that sums up the qualities of this unusual artist. **ON**

Exploring the unfettered sensuality of Schubert in Lied Me! | Porn Song, with pianist Daniel Gerzenberg



The 'now-ness' of the new

OLAVUR GJESTASON

By Franz Wulf

For director Amy Lane, commissioning new work from young creative teams is central to her programming at the annual Copenhagen Opera Festival. She explains the complex and unpredictable processes from which a new opera finally emerges

‘Commissioning a new opera is never about talking to one or two people – you’re assembling an army with one single mission.’ For the British stage director Amy Lane, who was appointed artistic director of the Copenhagen Opera Festival in 2020, bringing together creative teams through the months of the pandemic was a challenging but necessary task. ‘Opera is always an enormous undertaking even if it’s a very small piece with only a few soloists. It involves a network of artists coming together with one key aim: to produce a coherent performance in which all the elements – musical, scenic, dramatic – work together.’

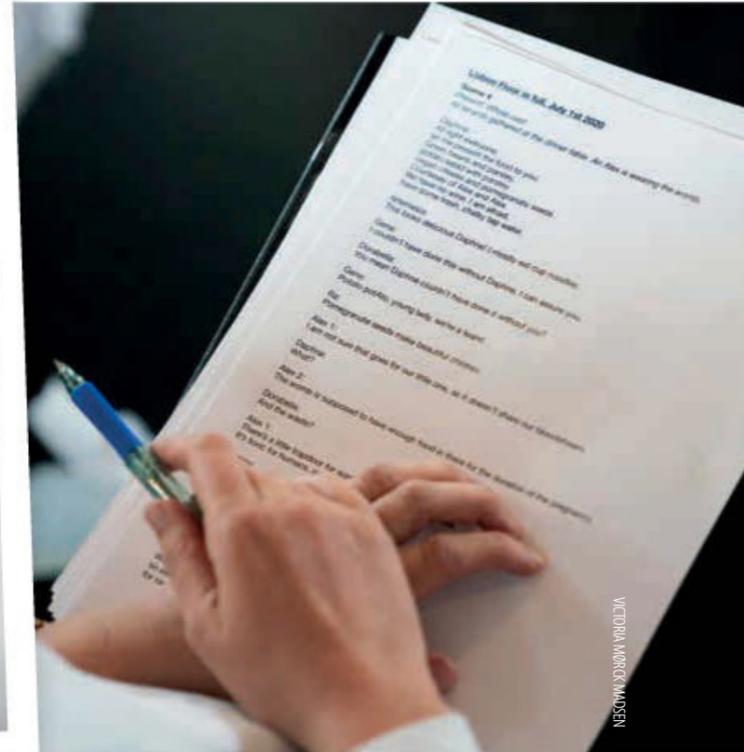
In Lane’s hands, the Copenhagen Opera Festival has continued to live up to its motto of ‘Opera for All’. In the thick of the pandemic and all its restrictions in 2020, the Danish public was encouraged to experience opera on their doorsteps and in their gardens in an initiative dubbed ‘100 Moments of Opera’. And last year’s festival took its main stage to Nørrebro – one of the edgier suburbs of Copenhagen. Works ranged from mainstream Puccini to ‘activist opera’, children’s opera and experimental creations that pushed the boundaries of how we think of the art form.

Staging a well-known traditional opera is complex enough, but when it comes to a new commission, the elements that need to be assembled are especially fragmented at the outset. Lane compares bringing a new work into existence to ‘a blissful jigsaw without the finished picture as a reference. Do you start with the composer or the writer? Or do you start with an idea? Or do you start with the space or the audience who the opera is for? There’s often no blueprint.’

The starting point of the Copenhagen Opera Festival’s commission at the 2021 was the cult novel *Nordkraft* by Jakob Ejersbo about the highs and lows of a group of drug dealers and addicts – a sort of Danish *Trainspotting*. The opera, by composer Signe Lykke and librettist by Nila Parly became a talking point in Copenhagen last summer. Lykke, writing her first opera, came up with a hypnotic, lyrical score that animates the inner lives of the damaged, emotionally broken protagonists of Ejersbo’s story, finding a musical language that revealed depths of sensitivity beneath the tough, messy exterior of human existence.

The opera’s success was based on the careful planning that went into the creative team, says Lane, who is quick to take no credit for the achievement: ‘It was put together brilliantly by my predecessor,

Composer Matias Vestergård Hansen in a music rehearsal for *Lisbon Floor*, to be premiered at the 2022 Copenhagen Opera Festival this August



Peter Lodahl, so I must give all the *chapeaux* to him. I've actually been very lucky in that when I arrived in Copenhagen, there were a few commissions already cooking and beginning to find their ground. *Nordkraft* provided a fantastic model of how a commission can be built from the spark of an idea to a thrilling first night.'

The evolution of *Nordkraft* is a perfect example of the mixture of risk, experience, imagination and creative leaps of faith that go into commissioning a new work: 'Signe Lykke is a very exciting and quite well-established musical figure, but this was her first opera, which is always a big ask from a composer,' says Lane. 'Anja Behrens, a theatre director who also uses a lot of music in her work, was making her debut in opera, too. So it was good to have the involvement at the outset of Jakob Hultberg, a conductor who has a lot of experience of opera in his work across several of Scandinavia's major opera houses, and really knows how to bring out the best in singers.'

Hultberg's role was crucial in delivering a work with ambitious musical forces for a first-time commission, with ten singers, a mini-chorus and a mobile orchestra – plus two dancers. Meanwhile, designer Christian Albrechtsen, also taking his first steps into opera, produced a visually breathtaking set design that defied stereotypes of urban grunge with its stark, abstract, luminous evocation of a psychologically disturbed underworld.

Ultimately, says Lane, the composer and librettist are key to the success of a new commission. 'But then, if you have a director working with them from the start, you're much more likely to create a 360-degree, all-encompassing experience. It's a bonus to have the conductor there at the outset, too. Ultimately, once the opera gets to the rehearsal room, there are two people leading the charge: the director and the conductor. And ideally they're getting on brilliantly! Commissioning is never a solitary thing. It needs to be shared.'

For its main commission in 2022, Copenhagen Opera Festival is presenting *Lisbon Floor*, composed by Matias Vestergård Hansen with libretto by Lea Marie Løppenthin and directed by Natascha Metherell. The opera follows seven characters who move into a vacant flat in a failed luxury development in South London. The tenants are of all sorts of age and backgrounds and apart from a cheerful couple who see sharing as a chance to meet new people, all of them have moved in out of desperation. Rivalries, friendships, unrequited love and an unresolved conflict from the past quickly emerge among the protagonists, as the property itself begins to unleash its own ghosts.

Although *Lisbon Floor* first started taking shape in 2019, its relevance has grown during its years of development. 'The experience of cohabiting is something that a younger generation is fixed on now,' says Lane, 'and this set of characters suddenly find themselves very contained within one space – a scenario that was intensified for everyone in the pandemic. Suddenly our entire world was reduced to a specific space.'

For Lane, this is one of the most exciting aspects of creating new work – that it can respond to the world around us in real time, as situations evolve. 'When you commission something, you're creating an event which says something about "now-ness". With *Lisbon Floor* the creative team were meeting on Zoom, and a lot of the workshops and rehearsals were in socially distanced conditions – so this is an opera whose very evolution reflects a particular moment in our human history. This responsiveness to the world of today is what engages audiences in new opera. We're all hungry for the next thing – new writing, new creativity, new visual worlds, new sounds, new stories. And all these elements are brought together when you're making a new opera.' **ON**

Left to right: Signe Lykke's first opera *Nordkraft* was a huge success at the 2021 Festival

Amy Lane: 'Creating a new work is like a blissful jigsaw'

A first read-through of Lea Marie Løppenthin's libretto for *Lisbon Floor*



PHOTOS: NICK RUTTER

All together now

David Buchler found much to celebrate in a dynamic showcase given by the young artists of the National Opera Studio in London's Cadogan Hall

The National Opera Studio trains talented young musicians to become the leading artists of the young generation through the provision of top-quality professional training. NOS works in partnership with six of the leading opera companies in the UK and on this evening had the luxury of working with the orchestra and associate conductor of the English National Opera. Richard Farnes was meant to be the conductor for the night but had succumbed to Covid and his place was taken by Olivia Clarke who is an English National Opera Mackerras Fellow. Amy Lane who is the Artistic Director of the Copenhagen Opera Festival (see page 46), directed a fun evening – just as she has done before with NOS artists.

The team of singers in the Studio worked hard to deliver an interesting program. Perhaps the dramatic start from Verdi's *Rigoletto* was a touch too much for the more Mozartian qualities of Ukrainian soprano Inna Husieva and South African baritone Kamohelo Tsotetsi. Husieva, however, showed her true colours in a successful combination with the Australian mezzo Shakira Tsindos (a Samling Young Artist), whom she joined for the Act one duet from Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*. The evening however really came alight with a performance by the Belgian countertenor Logan Lopez Gonzalez who sang The Refugee's Aria from Jonathan Dove's opera *Flight*. A moving duet from Act III Massenet's *Werther* was effectively sung by a British pair of singers, mezzo-soprano Siân Griffiths and soprano Ffion Edwards.

L-R: Jolyon Loy, Josef Ahn, Monwabisi Lindi and Thomas D Hopkinson
Joanna Harries

Director Amy Lane
rehearsing with Jolyon Loy
and Josef Ahn



The first half of the programme ended with the Act I duet from Donizetti's *La fille du régiment*, wonderfully performed by the Latvian soprano Laura Lolita Peresivana – a real stage animal – together with South African tenor Monwabisi Lindi. Peresivana took part with Siân Griffiths in Carmen's Card Trio, where a magnetic Italian mezzo-soprano Arlene Belli stole the show as Carmen. The British tenor Philip Clieve gave us a scene from Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* along with a superb bass Thomas D Hopkinson, who later returned to give a considered performance as Albert in a scene from Britten's *Albert Herring* with Gerrard McAuley and Judith Lebraukley – a great triumph.

Another excellent scene came from Handel's *Orlando* with Russian soprano Alexandra Chernenko joined by Ffion Edwards and Lopez Gonzales.

At the beginning of the programme, we heard Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, with Jolyon Loy's Don Magnifico leading a group of singers including Joanna Harries, Monwabisi Lindi, Korean bass Josef Ahn and Thomas D Hopkinson. A reprise of the Cinderella story towards the end of the evening saw the thrilling Shakira Tsindos star in the title role of Massenet's *Cendrillon* opposite Harries as her Prince. The whole confection concluded with the celebratory Act III Fugue from Verdi's *Falstaff* in which all the young artists in this superb line-up joined in.

The evening was a credit to the NOS with some very talented singers ready for a great career ahead. **ON**



On 8 March, young artist from the National Opera Studio will take part in an evening of *Anarchy* at the Opera at Hoxton Hall in London. www.nationaloperastudio.org.uk

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HANDEL

Theodora

Royal Opera House,
London

MUSIC ★★★★★

STAGING ★★★★★



Review by Ashutosh Khandekar • Photography by Camilla Greenwell

With this new *Theodora*, the Royal Opera House has proved that it can excel as a Handel house, and that the composer's works belong on its main stage and at the heart of its repertoire.

It says a great deal about the transcendental power of Handel's music that even Katie Mitchell, a director who generally likes to delve into the gloomier regions of the soul, here finds her way to a happy ending for *Theodora*'s protagonists, as the executed lovers quash their enemies and rise from the dead and into what seems like a more hopeful future (not at all what the original says).

The work, an oratorio rather than an opera of course, is one of Handel's most elevated, based on a rigorously sincere and often deeply affecting text by Thomas Morell, a close collaborator of the composer, pieced together from two plays about early Christian martyrdom, by Boyle and Corneille. Composed for the Lenten season of 1750, it shows Handel at his most musically fertile, achieving an astonishingly moving and near-perfect balance of spiritual and humane sentiments that both lift the heart and break it.

Mitchell is well known for her feminist take on traditional opera, with her



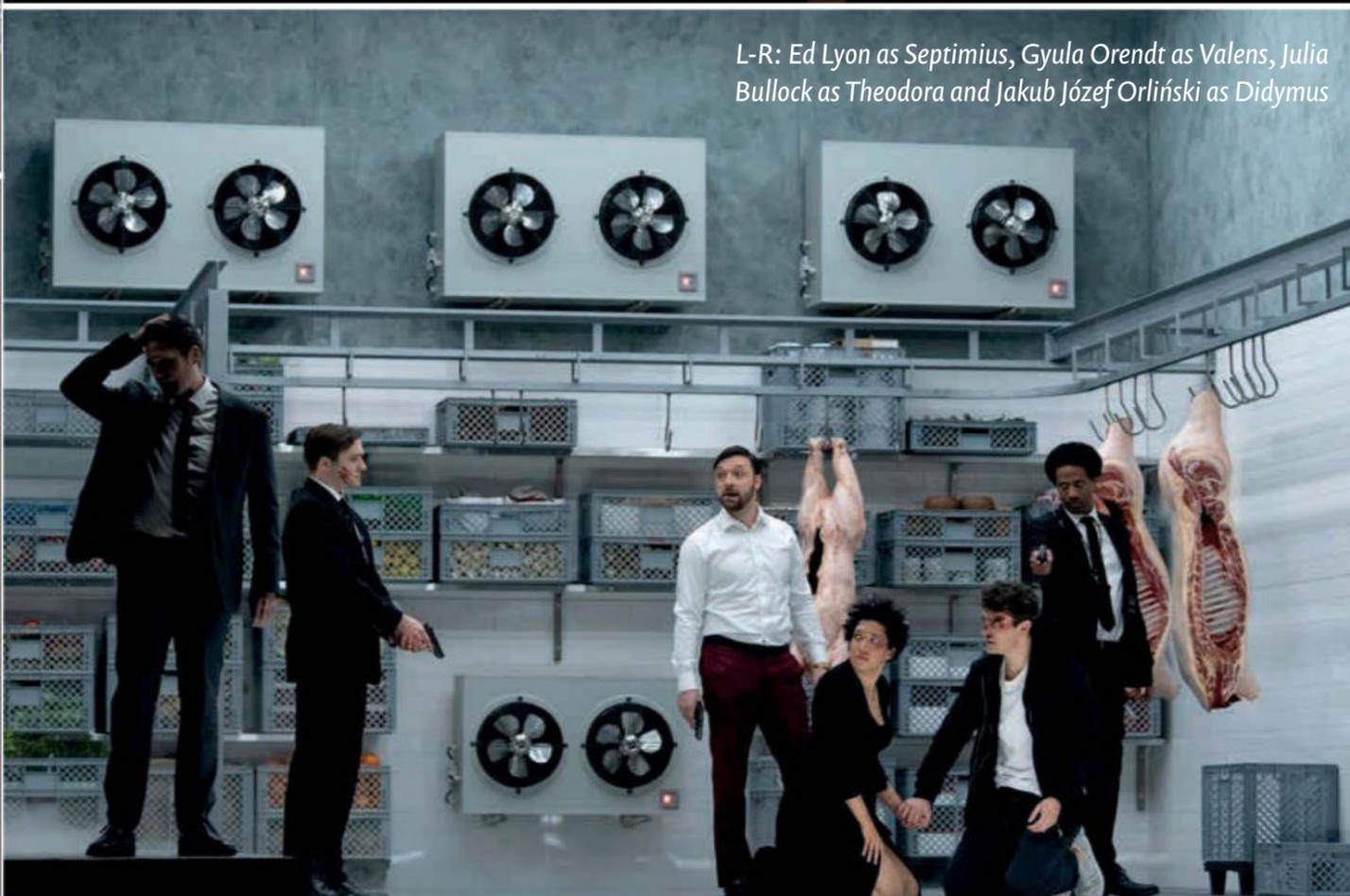
Pure physicality in the pole-dancing scene

productions built around a refusal to accept women as victims. Her concepts often feel contrived in 19th-century opera, but her strong female characters work well in *Theodora*, where it doesn't matter too much if the narrative doesn't always add up as long as there is an effective visual musical language that works with the music.

The oratorio unfolds as a series of vignettes which show the gradual transference of power from the oppressors to the downtrodden. Set designer Chloe Lamford presents us with an 'Upstairs-Downstairs' scenario, the Roman Embassy in Antioch, where the martyrs are kitchen staff, moving around in an underworld of



Powerful women: Julia Bullock as Theodora and Joyce Didonato as Irene



L-R: Ed Lyon as Septimius, Gyula Orendt as Valens, Julia Bullock as Theodora and Jakub Józef Orliński as Didymus



Party politics and class conflict in Katie Mitchell's thought-provoking production

intrigue and threat, while high-ranking bully-boys quaff champagne in their tuxedos somewhere in the upper realms. Theodora is plotting to take down the establishment with a suicide bomb (an increasingly clichéd theatrical device these days), and, having been discovered, is carted off to a prison/brothel where pole-dancers prove to be angels in disguise, gyrating gracefully, viscerally in tune with the lovely aria ‘Angels bright and fair’.

Mitchell asks a lot from her cast and they certainly give it their all here: trademark slow-motion sequences, cross-dressing, misogynistic exploitation and physical violence are all acted out with conviction and without a shred of detriment to the musical values. Julia Bullock as Theodora finds dignity and steel even in the depths of humiliation, her voice infused with a radiance that illuminates the unshakable faith that drives this character. Her lover Didymus is the handsome, tender-voiced countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński, who undergoes whatever self-sacrifice it takes – transvestitism, pole dancing, kitchen baptism – to prove the depths of his devotion to Theodora. At the heart of the production is Joyce DiDonato’s Irene, a spiritual leader who exudes a deep charisma that draws everyone around her into a secure, spiritual frame.

The baddies are, paradoxically, every bit as good: Gyula Orendt is barnstorming as Valens, the drunken, boorish commander, while tenor Ed Lyon gives a superbly ambiguous, vocally impressive performance as Septimius, the blustering bodyguard caught uneasily between the worlds of the sacred and profane.

Harry Bicket sweeps everything along in a reading that has bracing dramatic power along with many moments of sublime grace. The Royal Opera Orchestra doesn’t even try to sound like a period instrument band, and the chorus sounds even less ‘authentic’, but their playing and singing nevertheless strike at the expressive heart of a work that Handel himself quite rightly deemed to be among his finest creations. This was one of the most satisfying evenings I’ve had at the ROH in a long time. **ON**

ULLMANN

Der Kaiser von Atlantis



The Barbican Centre
London

MUSIC ★★★★★
STAGING ★★★★★

Left: Thomas Johannes Meyer as Emperor Overall

Below: Henry Waddington, compelling as Death wielding his sword at Robert Murray's Harlequin

Review by Claire Jackson • Photography by Mark Allan

Viktor Ullmann composed a substantial number of works – including three piano sonatas, a string quartet, songs and the chamber opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* – during 1942–44. The quality and depth of his harmonic language is noteworthy, but what makes the achievement remarkable is that Ullmann wrote this music while being detained at Theresienstadt (Terezín), a Czech ghetto used as a holding pen for victims of the Final Solution. Despite facing starvation, illness and the constant threat of ‘transportation’ to Auschwitz and elsewhere, Ullmann and others held concerts using whatever resources were available.

The music created at Terezín was at the centre of BBC Symphony Orchestra’s recent *Total Immersion: Music for the End of Time* – a day-long programme of events dedicated to art created in the camps of Nazi-occupied Europe – held at the Barbican.

In *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (1943), Death has gone on strike over a dispute with the Emperor, who has declared war on a mythical kingdom. As horror ensues – the dying are unable to pass on – the Emperor eventually agrees to accept Death’s proposal that he will resume work if the Emperor agrees to die too.

Kenneth Richardson directed a superb ensemble cast (selected by Sarah Playfair) to sing alongside 13 instrumentalists from the BBCSO conducted by Josep Pons, in a semi-staged performance of this one-act

opera, paired with Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*, written while the composer was held as a POW in Germany. Henry Waddington was a compelling Death, wryly noting that ‘war isn’t what it once was’. As Emperor Overall, Thomas Johannes Mayer stayed the right side of caricature, making his demands via a loudspeaker (Derrick Ballard) positioned at the back of the stage. The amplification (the opera was recorded for broadcast on Radio 3) hindered diction only slightly. Minimalistic props had maximum impact: Harlequin Robert Murray’s chequered scarf and handkerchief produced a perfect pierrot; Waddington’s sword was simple and sinister.

Ullmann studied with Schoenberg and Alois Hába, and *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* bears the hallmarks of early modernism. The unusual orchestration, which includes banjo and alto saxophone, was originally out of necessity, but the timbral variety fits the dystopian narrative. Stylistically, there are hints of Kurt Weill and even Peter Maxwell Davies. There are multiple musical references – the Angel of Death motif from Josef Suk’s *Asrael Symphony* appears throughout and the Lutheran chorale *Ein feste Burg* makes a disguised appearance.

Some music making in Terezín was tolerated by the Nazis, who used performances as part of their international propaganda (Verdi’s *Requiem* was sung to Red Cross officials during a visit in 1944). However, the distortion of the German national anthem in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* – and the obvious political satire –

meant that guards banned the opera after overseeing rehearsals. ‘By no means did we sit weeping on the banks of the waters of Babylon,’ reflected Ullmann in a diary entry, ‘Our endeavour with respect to art was commensurate with our will to live.’ Composer and cast were subsequently murdered in Auschwitz.

Much of Ullmann’s music was lost during the war. The manuscripts to *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* were preserved by another prisoner and the work received its premiere in 1975 by the Dutch National opera; the first UK performance took place in 1985 at the Imperial War Museum. The Total Immersion concert – timed to coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day – made a strong case for the continued revival of this important opera. **ON**

Der Kaiser von Atlantis will be broadcast on Radio 3 on 11 March at 7:30pm and will be available via BBC Sounds for 30 days thereafter



**Les Talens Lyriques/
Christophe Rousset
Opéra Royal Versailles,
Paris**

MUSIC ★★★★★
STAGING concert

Lully's 1678 'tragédie lyrique' *Psyché* is to a libretto by Thomas Corneille and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle. Reputedly written at some speed, the score re-uses material Lully had previously written for Molière's play in 1671.

Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques confirmed (if such confirmation were needed) their excellence in Lully with their recent recording of *Isis*, the opera which immediately preceded *Psyché*. On this occasion, *Psyché* was given in a concert performance of two hours 15 minutes duration, without interval. Some cuts were instituted, including dances from the fifth and final act, but the subsequent recording, on the Château de Versailles Spectacles label, will be complete.

There was no disguising the glory of Lully's music in this near-faultless account. Rarely has period orchestral playing achieved so much. The chorus, too (which included the soloists) was of the

LULLY

Psyché

Review by Colin Clarke • Photography by Pascal Le Mée

highest level, offering some truly affecting, drooping lines in the Prologue.

The story finds the Goddess Venus jealous of the beautiful mortal Psyché (who is to be sacrificed to appease a dragon). Although Vénus tries to destroy Psyché, Amour (Vénus' son) falls in love with the mortal. There are no significant subplots – this is a simple story.

Rousset has consistently proved his expertise in finding perfect young singers. Certainly, the casting here was incredibly strong. Ambroisine Bré, vocally the purest of Psychés, (surely not coincidentally garbed in white) was beautifully complemented by Bénédicte Tauran's Vénus. Tauran's voice is strong, but she is also endowed with a remarkable, enriching subtlety. Interactions between Vénus and Psyché were as ravishing as they were gripping. Among the gentlemen, it was baritone Anas Séguin's Lycas that towered

in its confidence and vocal beauty; Cyril Auvity's fresh-voiced, emotional Amour was another stand-out.

Drawing all of this together was Rousset's impeccable sense of style and structure. His ability to make deep emotional moments register was only equalled by his ability to draw the piece together on the larger level. He pinpoints the atmosphere for each act. In Act IV, for example, Psyché visits the Underworld, and Rousset darkens the sound magnificently. It's true that the final sudden plot turnaround – forgiveness and praise for the Glory of Love – is somewhat unbelievable for today's audience, but how keenly one felt the sense of celebration.

This was a true triumph. *Psyché* is defined by its subtlety (despite a trip to Hades!), which meant that the concentration on its musical qualities demanded by a concert performance enabled a multiplicity of revelations. **ON**

*Incredibly strong casting
among Les Talens Lyriques
at the Opéra Royal Versailles*

*Inset: Christophe Rousset:
An impeccable sense of style*





A scene from *Andrea Chénier*, which launched the operatic celebrations for the Bicentenary of the Greek Revolution

ROUND-UP

Bicentenary Celebrations for the Greek Revolution of 1821

by Helena Matheopoulos

Despite the temporary closures imposed by Covid-related restrictions, the Bicentenary of the Greek War of Independence from the Ottomans (1821/2021) was celebrated by Greek National Opera in an imaginative and informative way. The celebrations around the theme of Revolution were inaugurated last year by a production of Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* (reviewed in the August 2021 issue of *Opera Now*). Nikos Petropoulos' stylish, beautifully designed staging has just been revived and re-cast at GNO's splendid home at Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre.

In terms of Greece's own national operatic legacy, audiences in Athens had the opportunity to hear live performances of all three operas related to the Greek Revolution by arguably Greece's greatest operatic composer, Pavlos Carrer (1829-1896): *Marcos Botsaris* (*Marco Bozzari* in its Italian version), *Despo* and his masterpiece, *Kyra Frosini*. (In addition, there was *Andronica* by the lesser-known Alexandros Grek (1876-1959), thought lost but rediscovered in 2014).

Pavlos Carrer (1829-1896) is one of the foremost Greek composers of the 19th

century. He was born on the island of Zante (Zakynthos) which, as part of the Ionian Islands, had never been subjugated by the Ottomans and flourished first as a Venetian, then briefly as a French and later as a British Protectorate. It developed a rich musical and operatic tradition and produced a substantial crop of composers, all of whom were schooled in Italy and whose operas were performed at La Scala and the Teatro San Carlo in Naples.

Born a year before the liberation and the formation of the modern Greek state in 1830, Carrer was the scion of an aristocratic family and a composer

Konstantinos Klironomos: moving in the title role of revolutionary hero Marcos Botsaris

Revolutionary spirit: Pavlos Carrer – one of the foremost Greek composers of the 19th century

The Athens State Orchestra and Chorus were conducted with total assurance and idiomatic expertise by Byron Fidetzis, the Ionian music expert par excellence, who provided a new orchestration.

Pavlos Carrer's *Kyra Frosini*, with a libretto by Elissavetio Martinengo and based on the eponymous poem by the Greek poet Aristotle Valaoritis, is the most musically mature of the composer's three operas, with an atmospheric 'oriental' colour and a marked Italian influence in the vocal writing.

The cast in the concert performance of this wonderful opera, which deserves a fully staged production, did it full justice. Headed by baritone Dionysios Sourbis and soprano Vassiliki Karayanni (both singers with an international presence) as Aly Pasha and Kyra Frosini, it included tenor Yannis Christopoulos as Mouchar, the Pasha's son, Tassos Apostolou as Ignatius, Julia Souglakou as the Hamko's Ghost/Irene and Haris Andrianos as Tachir.

Sourbis was a gripping Aly Pasha, with his mellow, richly coloured baritone beautifully showcased in this music. He was vocally totally secure in the amazing coloratura roulades in his big aria, *Aprilis efani* (April is dawning), which brought the house down. He was equally impressive in his duet with Frosini, exquisitely sung here by Karayanni who also thrilled the audience in her aria.

The Greek National Opera's orchestra and chorus were expertly and idiomatically conducted by Ilias Voudouris and the audience emerged elated from the performance – mystified at why this work is so rarely staged.

The reason may be that, after many years in oblivion, the score of *Kyra Frosini* (which had enjoyed huge international success for more than 50 years), was finally found and painstakingly reassembled by Byron Fidetzis. Thus in recent years, this still little-known opera has begun to receive a degree of international recognition. >



HARIS BOTSARIS

typical of the 'italianate' Ionian school. Like several of his contemporary Greek composers, he was profoundly moved by the heroic struggle that led to his country's independence and composed three operas inspired by celebrated heroes and heroines of the revolution: *Marcos Botsaris*, *Kyra Frosini* (1868) and the one Act monodrama *Despo* (1882), all three with libretti in both Italian and Greek. The music combines what a distinguished musicologist defined as 'the creative synthesis of the Italian operatic tradition and the Greek spirit and musical idiom, ie 'italianità' and 'Greekness', especially in *Botsaris* and *Despo*.

The four-act *Marcos Botsaris* (premiered in Patras in 1861 and later performed all over Greece as well as abroad, in Siena, Cairo, Trieste, Alexandria, Bucharest and Odessa), is a stirringly patriotic opera about one of the legendary heroes of the Revolution, which aroused audiences to delirium! (Many of the men in the audiences were moved to enlist as volunteers for the Cretan revolution which raged at the time.) Musically it is the most 'Greek' in style of his three operas – the others tend to evoke Donizetti and early Verdi. It contains an aria, 'O *Gerodimos*' that became one of the most popular Greek folk songs.

The opera demands five accomplished voices, and it got them in this concert performance at the Maria Callas Municipal Musical Theatre in Olympia. The young

tenor Konstantinos Klironomos was well cast as the protagonist: he acted his heroic role with verve and sang his music movingly. So did Giorgos Kanaris as the terrifying traitor, Milo-Mustafa, with his well-schooled, sonorous baritone possessing a patina of colours that changed according to each side of this double-crossing character. Soprano Anna Stylianaki sang Milo-Mustafa's wife with limpid poise.

One of the stars of the evening was the distinguished bass Christophoros Stamboglis (who often appears at Covent Garden), as the national hero, Archbishop Germanos of Patras, the first to proclaim the Revolution in 1821. Stamboglis sang the role with blazing passion, his voice gloriously rich in size and volume, effortlessly dominating the stage.

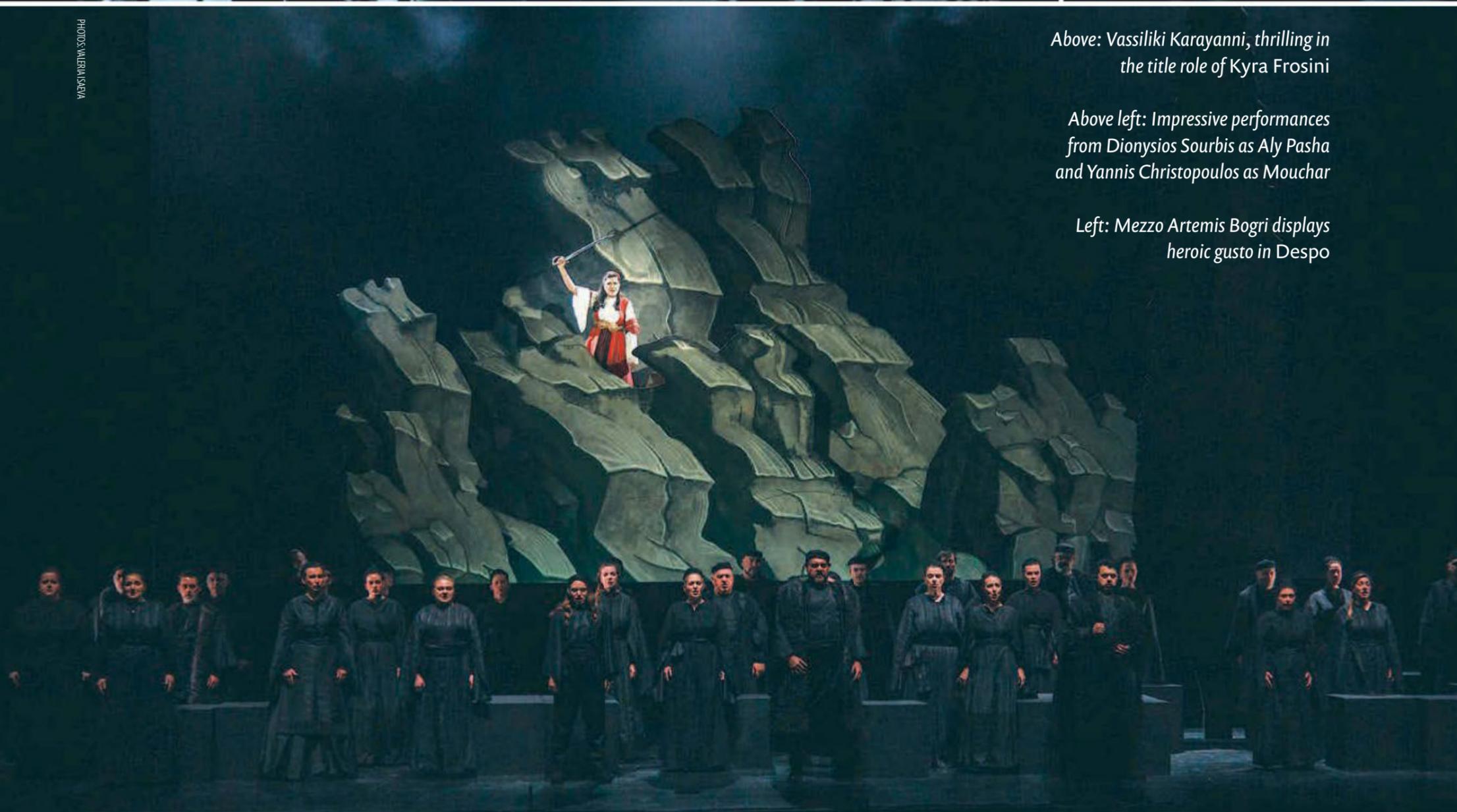
Another star was mezzo Artemis Bogri, as Botsaris' wife Chryssi, singing all her music – but especially her very long, difficult aria – with total aplomb, deploying a palette of different colours and dynamic nuances that reflected the whole gamut of emotions the character experiences. She, like Stamboglis, was rewarded with a protracted ovation from the enthusiastic public.



Above: Vassiliki Karayanni, thrilling in the title role of Kyra Frosini

Above left: Impressive performances from Dionysios Sourbis as Aly Pasha and Yannis Christopoulos as Mouchar

Left: Mezzo Artemis Bogri displays heroic gusto in Despo



PHOTOS: VALENTINA ISAEVA

Carrer's last work about the Greek Revolution, the one-act opera *Despo*, received an atmospheric staging by director Yorgos Nanouris. The opera highlights the sacrifice of the widow of a chieftain fighting the Ottomans in the northern Greek region of Souli, who blows herself up after her husband's death along with a group of other women, to avoid capture by the enemy. The heroine was

superbly sung and acted by the admirable, vocally assured and good-looking mezzo Artemis Bogri. The composer wrote that '*Despo* is a work in which I strived to implement Greek musical colour in a way that suits the nature and style of the subject'. Bogri attacked this fiercely heroic music with gusto and vocal aplomb, all of which delighted the audience.

Tenor Dimitris Paksoglou, acquitted

himself admirably in the part of Markos, a messenger. Equally satisfying were Yannis Selitsaniotis as the chieftain Lambros and Diamanti Kritsotaki as his son. The orchestra, under Yorgos Ziavras, caught the spirit of the opera's patriotic fervour and the GNO chorus distinguished itself, as it almost always does, expertly, prepared by its chorus master, Agathangelos Georgakatos. **ON**

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Take ten

Francis Muzzu highlights ten superb young voices that he has encountered during his recent reviewing of new releases on CD and video

The last couple of years have sadly meant that we have had fewer opportunities to experience singers performing live onstage. Consequently, there has been more of a reliance on seeing and hearing them online and on CD and DVD. Here are ten artists who may be new to you and who have caught my attention while they were essentially locked down in their home countries – these are some of the lucky ones who somehow have managed to produce work when they could. Perhaps performances were already ‘in the can’, created between lockdowns or even performed onstage with social distancing and no audience. But the show did go on and continues to do so, and therefore I have also looked ahead to what new work they have coming up, working on the optimistic assumption that everything will go to plan. Check these artists out on their websites and video channels for a taste of the extraordinary riches this new generation has to offer.

Sara Blanch:
Dazzling
vocalism



Adriana Bignagni Lesca:
Sit-up-and-listen attack

RICHARD PUVANE

Adriana Bignagni Lesca

Reviewing the recent new release of Mozart’s *Mitridate*, conducted by Marc Minkowski, I commented on the performer of the small role of Arbate: ‘Adriana Bignagni Lesca’s mezzo has a sit-up-and-listen attack that marks her out as a young singer to watch’. Bignagni Lesca has a rich tone and bags of personality. She studied in Bordeaux, hence the link with Minkowski, who has just finished as director of the Opéra there, and she is now poised to take her career to the next level: she missed out on singing *Mistress Quickly* in Laurent Pelly’s cancelled new production of *Falstaff* in Bordeaux; but this summer you can catch her in his production of Rameau’s *Platée* in Paris, at the Palais Garnier, when she sings Juno (also under Minkowski). Fascinatingly, she specialises in Pygmy song, which she refers to as Gabonese Blues, which she performs in concert juxtaposed against a classical background such as Bach, a unique cultural blend.

Sara Blanch

Sara Blanch cropped up in the title role of an excellent recording of Rossini’s *Matilde di Shabran* that I reviewed a year

ago, and which surprised me with its dazzling vocalism (it is well worth seeking out). It was recorded live at the Rossini in Wildbad Festival the preceding year and proved a great lockdown tonic. Blanch’s soprano showed extraordinary confidence in surmounting the coloratura challenges she faced, and they are many – I described her as ‘dazzling’. She trained in Barcelona, and now performs there, most recently as *Zerbinetta* (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and next she has a *Königin der Nacht* to surmount this summer in a starrily double-cast *Die Zauberflöte*. She enjoyed a triumph in *La fille du régiment* at the last Donizetti Festival in Bergamo, and sings the major coloratura and lighter lyric roles.

Jeanine De Bique

Soprano Jeanine De Bique only just makes the list – not because I doubt her worth, but because it has already been discovered by so many. She has just sung the title role in *Alcina* at the Paris Opéra and has also made her mark singing Handel and Mozart in larger houses. Her appearance as *La Folie* in Rameau’s *Platée* (filmed in Vienna in 2020) gave De Bique the chance to knock the role on the head vocally while channelling the inner diva; she gives



Jeanine De Bique:
Intense beauty of tone

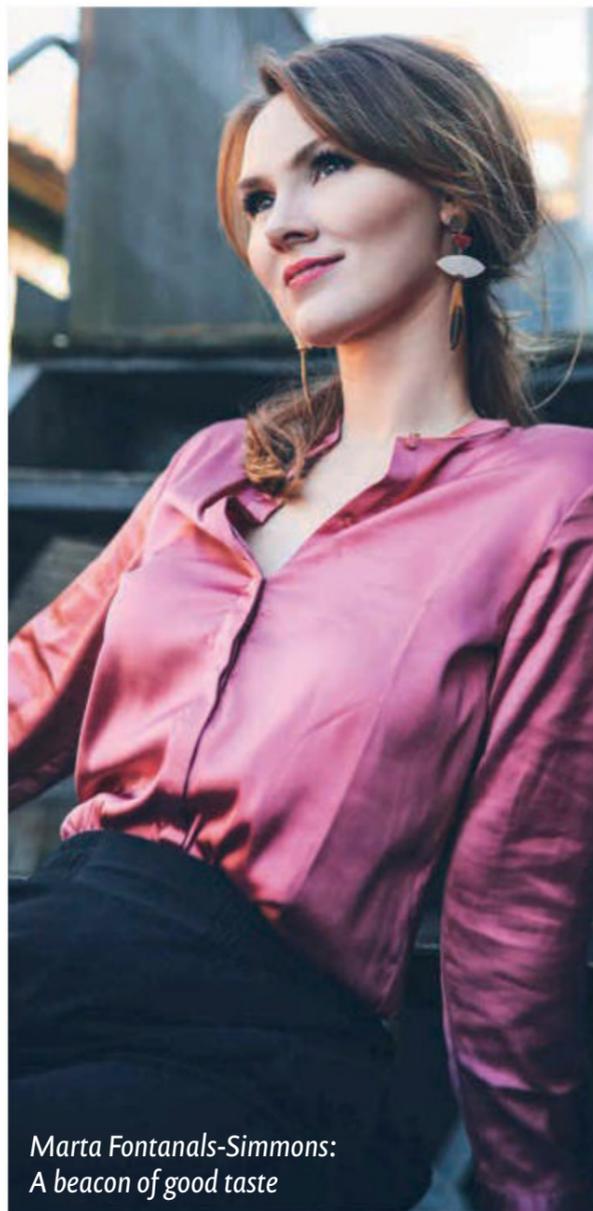
Adriana González:
A multitude of colours



Beyoncé a good run for her money! But it's not all high notes and long legs. Her debut album, *Mirrors*, was a hit, and you should seek out the videos of her singing Agathe in a semi-staged *Der Freischütz* in Berlin last year, where she unfolds Weber's long phrases with immense poise and an intense beauty of tone. The coming months see De Bique mainly in concert, culminating in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony under Dudamel in LA. For opera, you will have to wait until July, when she performs Anaïs in Rossini's *Moïse et Pharaon* in the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence – an enticing prospect.

Marta Fontanals-Simmons

Marta Fontanals-Simmons is currently part of the ensemble at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, giving her the chance to sing smaller roles and hone her craft. But having seen her Siébel in Covent Garden's revival of *Faust* a couple of years ago, I know she has no problem in standing alongside more established stars: in an unashamedly vulgar production she shone as a beacon of sincerity and good taste. Her mezzo is smooth, her acting affecting. Surely she is poised to move from 'doing the rounds' of *Messiah* and small venues



Marta Fontanals-Simmons:
A beacon of good taste

and consolidate her presence on the larger stage. The Mozart mezzo roles beckon, and her French style was idiomatic, so more of that, please. As you read this, she is in Lully's *Atys* in Geneva then Versailles, and this summer she appears in a Glyndebourne rarity, Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*.

Adriana González

Adriana González studied at the opera studio at the Paris Opéra, collecting prizes along the way, but hit the big time by winning First Prize and Zarzuela Prize in Operalia 2019. Since then she has made a series of good debuts, her lyric soprano in demand for roles such as Mimì, Liù and Micaëla. But she obviously has a more questing personality, and alongside conductor and pianist Iñaki Encina Oyón she has recorded two albums of rarities that highlight her art: firstly when Encina Oyón fortuitously rescued the 20th-century songs of Robert Dussaut and Hélène Covatti from oblivion, and then they expanded our knowledge of the songs of Isaac Albéniz. Both albums reveal a great working partnership, and González' voice displays an excellent balance of thrust with tonal spin. She has

a multitude of colours on which to draw, and performs with huge sensitivity. An album of arias connected to 18th-century soprano Adriana Ferrarese del Bene is in the pipeline (she created Mozart's Fiordiligi), and if you want to see González on stage she sings Gounod's Juliette in Houston in May.

Evan LeRoy Johnson

Evan LeRoy Johnson works a lot at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, where the audiences know a good thing when they hear it. He debuted there as Cassio in 2018, gaining invaluable experience onstage alongside stars like Jonas Kaufmann and Anja Harteros, conducted by Kirill Petrenko. Singing the smaller roles has really paid off so now it means that he does get even more plum jobs. This summer the annual Opera Festival in Munich sees him as Macduff alongside Anna Netrebko's Lady Macbeth as well as Rodolfo in *La bohème*. LeRoy Johnson particularly garnered attention at Glyndebourne in 2019 as the Prince in *Rusalka*, caught on film, where his



*Evan LeRoy Johnson:
An ardent tenor*



*Samuel Mariño: A strikingly
pure and flexible voice*

ardent tenor made a great impression in an excellent production. He sings in his native USA in September, taking on Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*.

Samuel Mariño

Samuel Mariño is that rare beast, a male soprano, with a strikingly pure and flexible voice. Reviewing his debut album of Handel and Gluck arias I admired not just his range (sailing up to a high C) but also his breath control and phrasing, as well as the dramatic attack that he brought to recitatives – he is more than just a singing machine. Unsurprisingly he specialises in Baroque music, but also turns his skills to more surprising pieces – Mariño has performed music such as Maria in *West Side Story* and Verdi's Oscar (*Un ballo in maschera*) as well as castrato roles like Arsace (Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira*). Look out for him in concert at Versailles

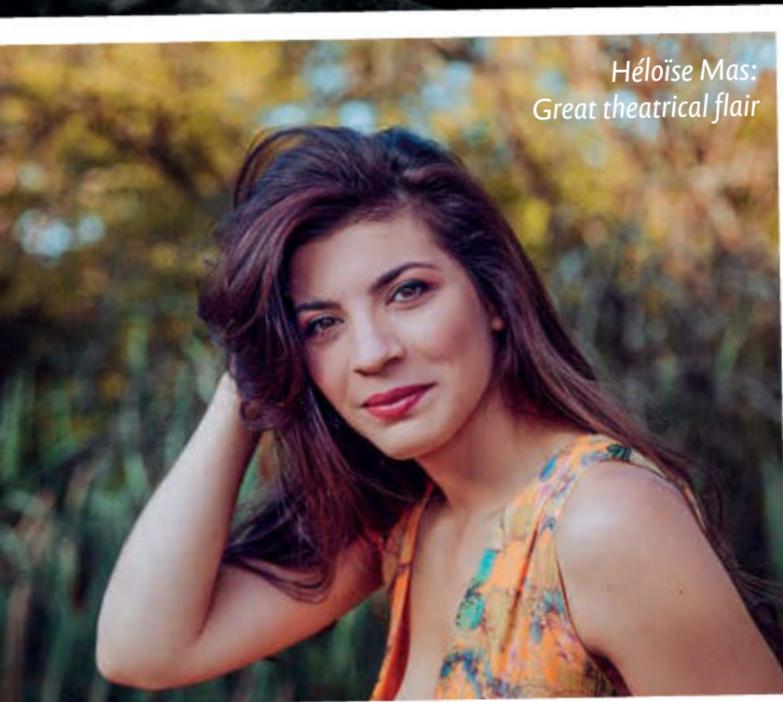
with countertenor Filippo Mineccia, singing Pergolesi and Vivaldi; then find Mariño moving into contemporary opera with Zhou Long's *Madame White Snake* at the Opéra Comique in Paris this summer.

Héloïse Mas

Héloïse Mas almost walked off with the show singing Boulotte in Offenbach's *Barbe-bleue* at the Opéra de Lyon (though the rest of the cast put up a good fight, as can be seen on the film of Laurent Pelly's excellent 2019 production). She is cheerfully and vulgarly unabashed and reveals a ripe mezzo and great theatrical flair as she clumps around. It transpires that Mas was padded for the role and is in fact rather more lissom. She sings Mallika to Sabine Devieille's Lakmé in Madrid this month, then moves up a dramatic notch to sing the gormless warbler Smeton to Sonya Yoncheva's Anna Bolena in concert



James Newby:
Hugely communicative



Héloïse Mas:
Great theatrical flair

at the Théâtre des Champs Élysée. In May she hits the emotional heights as the unhappy Charlotte in *Werther*, in a production in Lausanne by Vincent Boussard. It should give her the chance

to release her mezzo, sing with passion and look stunning in Christian Lacroix's costumes.

James Newby

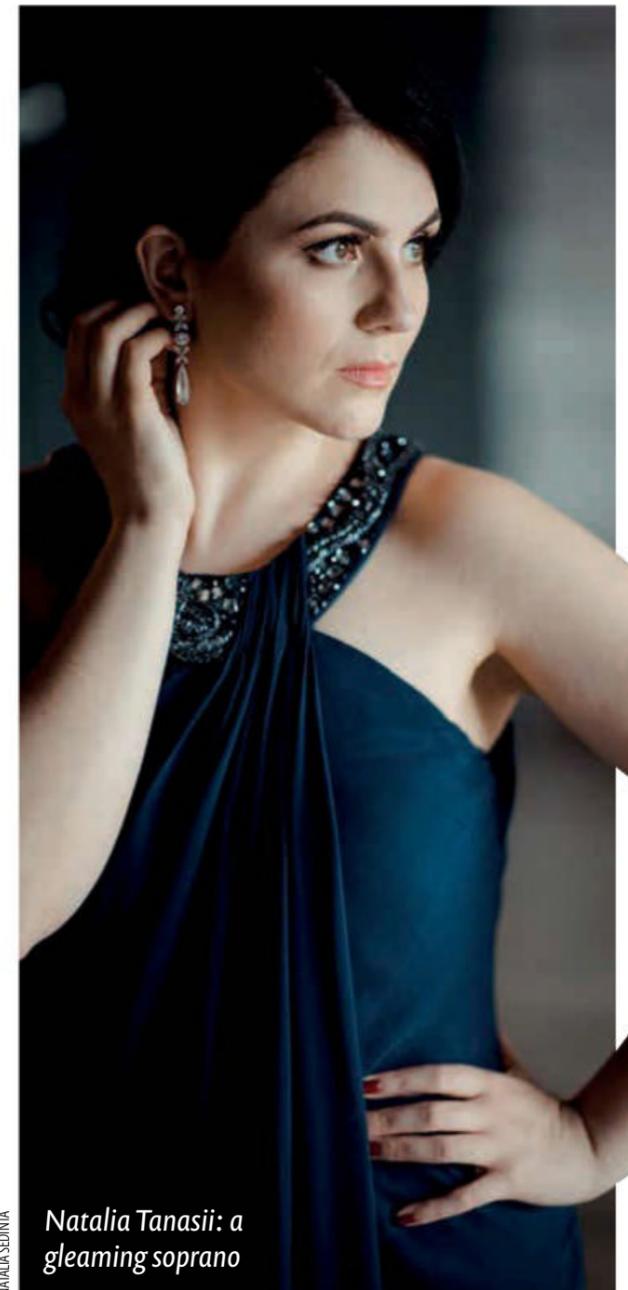
Baritone James Newby made people take note when he won a slew of prizes, including the Kathleen Ferrier Award in 2016. He was immediately and understandably marked out as a Lieder singer, and he performs a lot on the concert platform, but he has sensibly left his options open and is currently on the roster at the Staatsoper Hannover. This means he gets to develop his stagecraft in a wide range of genres and has just sung Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* as well as sporting a red tracksuit and shaved head as Eddy in Turnage's *Greek*. He is obviously a hugely communicative performer who is interested in pushing the boundaries – watch the video of him singing a

GERARD COLLETT

Handel aria, a riff on Radiohead's track *No Surprises*. A big new role for Newby is Eugene Onegin in Hannover this summer in a new production by Barbora Horáková Joly, which should be thought-provoking.

Natalia Tanasii

Natalia Tanasii caught my attention whilst I was reviewing the film of 2019's *Elektra* from Salzburg. Although singing the fleeting role of Fifth Maid her gleaming soprano shone out above the melée of sound that characterises the opening scene and had me scrabbling for the cast list to see who she was. She honed her art at the International Opera Studio in Zurich, then in the ensemble at Norwegian National Opera. Right now, Tanasii seems to be moving from support roles into main ones – I doubt she'll be unhappy if she never sings Kate Pinkerton again. She was Tatyana in last year's *Eugene Onegin* at Garsington, and also stood in to sing that role in Liège with success. She is starring in *La bohème* in Lisbon this March. **ON**



NAVILIA SEDINIA

Natalia Tanasii: a
gleaming soprano

Artistainternational

Künstlermanagement Oper, Konzert und Lied



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Irakli Atanelishvili
Bass



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Mezzo-soprano



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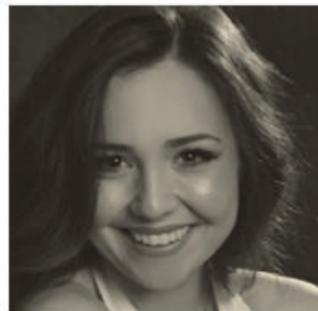
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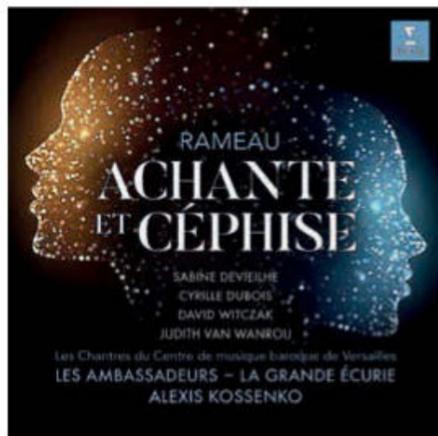
Mengqi Zhang
Coloratura soprano

New releases

By Francis Muzzu



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★★★★★



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Hans Thomalla
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L'enigma di Lea
Benet Casablancas
Naxos NBD0143V
★★★★

CDs and downloads

Sandrine Piau is one of those singers who rarely disappoints: not because she is dully reliable, but because she possesses a gorgeous voice along with the imagination to use it to great purpose. In this new album, Piau doesn't particularly tread new ground, but builds her selection of Handel arias around the basic idea of enchantment. All the women here have either a literal ability in terms of sorcery, such as Alcina, or the personal magnetism to attract and affect others – Cleopatra is obviously a woman who draws people into her orbit. Handel wrote incredibly sensitively not just for the female voice but also to enable women to express emotions from love to hatred, rage to despair. Piau conveys these feelings to the full. Her singing is pretty faultless, with her soprano buoyant and lively, sailing easily through the runs and triplets that come her way, as well as moulding a pliant and

expressive line. Her singing of Lucrezia's suicidal 'Alla salma infedel porga la pena' is mesmerising as she floats through just one line of text that is extended for three minutes. It is interesting that Piau considers Almirena in *Rinaldo* to be the 'ultimate heroine' – a woman who just languishes while waiting to be rescued. Who wouldn't rather be Armida, who at least goes down all guns blazing. The only slight diminution in excellence is perhaps Alcina's 'Ah! mio cor!', the emotional heart of the album, in which Piau is perhaps a touch pushed by the elevated tessitura, though this may be an interpretative decision. Alongside the arias are three movements from the Concerti Grossi and an overture, allowing Jérôme Correas and Les Paladins to display their sonorous abilities to the full.

Rameau's *Achante et Céphise* is a *pastorale-héroïque*, also known in its rare references as *Acante et Céphise*, ('Achante' was an uncorrected proof). It

has languished almost unseen since its premiere in 1751, when it was commissioned to celebrate the birth of Louis, Duke of Burgundy; he was the first son of the Dauphin and therefore a probable future King of France, (in fact the poor mite died at the age of nine, though arguably he dodged a curveball in leaving his younger brother to become Louis XVI). The plot is generally derided as tosh, but I rather like its conceit of a talismanic bracelet that provides the central couple with mutual emotional telepathy, also enabling them to sing together for large parts of the opera. The glory of the piece is its extraordinary orchestration, explained with passion by conductor Alexis Kossenko in the booklet. Using clarinets and horns for the first time in Paris, Rameau went all out to shock the system with his range of colours and rhythms, starting with the overture's explosions that echo the fireworks celebrating the birth. It is startling stuff, and

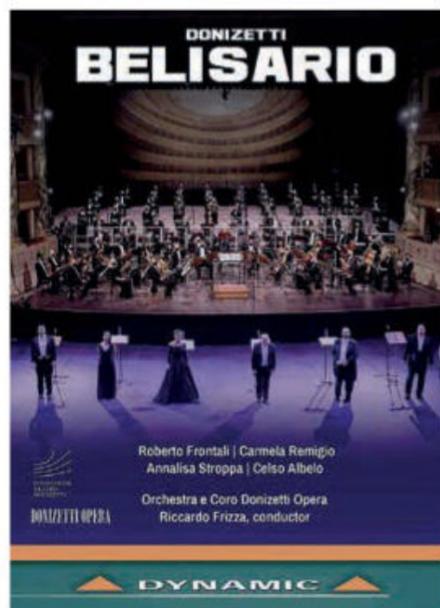
the thrills don't let up through the sequence of sung and danced numbers, all conducted and played vigorously. Consequently the singing is slightly overshadowed, but it does offer Sabine Devieille and Cyrille Dubois as the central couple, both on excellent and graceful form. Judith Van Wanroij is a charming Zirphile and David Witczak an arresting Oros, the troublesome genie.

A quick jump of 270 years to a contemporary opera by Hans Thomalla. *Dark Spring* was recorded live in Mannheim in 2020, and I would have liked to see it rather than just listen to it. The production photographs look interesting and I suspect would have elevated my slightly 'so what' attitude to one of higher enthusiasm. The piece is based on Wedekind's play *Frühlings Erwachen* (*Spring Awakening*), one so shocking that since its Berlin premiere in 1906 it has caused constant controversy, often censored or banned. It even crops up in contemporary youth culture, in TV series *90210* and *Home* ➤



Rigoletto
Verdi
Dynamic 57921
★★★★

and *Away*; in the latter, a character studying it succinctly opines that ‘parents don’t get their kids’ and that ‘schools don’t teach the important things’, which sums it up perfectly. *Dark Spring* reduces the play’s cast to four, who between them face puberty and its attendant horrors: here that includes pondering the meaning of life and dealing



Belisario
Donizetti
Dynamic 57907
★★★★

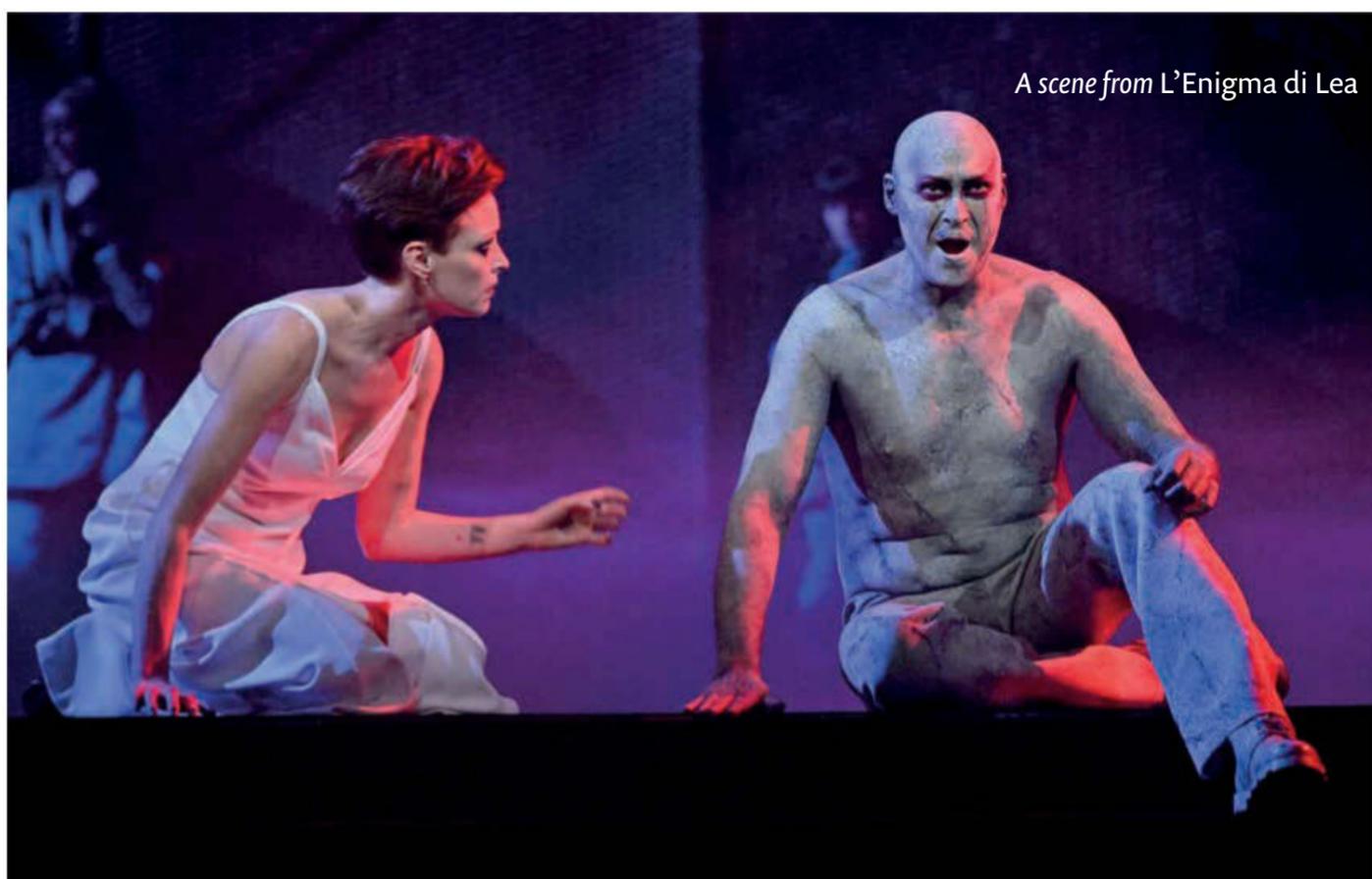
with anger management, drugs, rape, pregnancy, abortion, homosexuality and suicide. Thomalla’s music is oft atonal, delving into some tonality for songs inspired by American pop and music theatre, alongside electronic guitars and keyboard, plus drums, still compositionally complex; the English lyrics are by Joshua Clover. Conductor

Alan Pierson adeptly describes it as a ‘song opera’. Shachar Lavi (mezzo), Anna Hybner (soprano), Magid El-Bushra (countertenor) and Christopher Diffey (tenor) perform their roles with confidence. But I imagine that seeing *Dark Spring* would make a more forceful impression than just hearing it.

DVDs and Blu-ray
Benet Casablanca’s opera *L’enigma di Lea* is a world premiere recording that we actually do get to see, filmed at Barcelona’s Liceu in 2019. The opera takes Wedekind and Thomalla’s ‘meaning of life’ narrative to a whole new level. In a symbolist and mythical story, Lea has been ‘possessed’ by God, sees the meaning of immortality, and is consequently punished by wandering under constant surveillance through space and time to the Last Border. She continues her quest for personal, romantic and sexual freedom and redemption through two more acts – a little less would have been a little more. And yet another

male composer tackles the subject of sexual violence against women, or here, extraordinarily, ‘divine rape’. How on earth to stage the opera? Director Carme Portaceli goes large, with massive metal structures that allow ample room for manoeuvre and suggest endless space. The cast is strong, with Allison Cook indefatigable as Lea, not just vocally but physically: she is most eloquent of movement. José Antonio López’s baritone is firm as the man who helps provide Lea’s redemption, and Xavier Sabata threatens to steal the show as the manipulative circus master-turned-doctor who impedes her. The orchestra is large and gets a good workout under Josep Pons, likewise the chorus. Casablanca’s music is richly scored, often lush, very singable (he obviously relishes writing for very specific vocal types across all ranges). Interesting, but just too much of a good thing.

A 2021 performance of Verdi’s *Rigoletto* from the Opera di Firenze is perhaps better heard than seen (it is also available on CD). I realise that it verges on the impossible to devise a socially distanced production but, once you’ve got over Davide Livermore’s initial *konzept*, not much happens here. The Duke runs a bar, Gilda lives in a not-so-beautiful launderette, Rigoletto collects her body on a platform on the underground. It is all very slickly done but it is hardly original. There is a bleakness that is emotionally unengaging. Riccardo Frizza conducts the score *come scritto*, there are no traditional high notes or cadenzas here. The singers are very good: Luca Salsi reveals a subtle side to his art as Rigoletto and Javier Camarena is an ebullient but



A scene from *L’Enigma di Lea*

OperaNow CHOICE

stylish Duke. Gilda is Enkeleda Kamani, who is singing the role a lot in important houses. Her soprano is suitably angelic, alas with no trill, but I cannot fathom whether she is inert by nature or direction. Not since Alida Ferrarini in the 1980s have I encountered such a beautifully sung yet blank reading of the role. Unfortunately we have our third rape of this review, but Kamani seems to allow herself to be abducted without even moving and then shrugs it off. Overall, a *Rigoletto* that fails to move and doesn't work. Maybe the lack of audience negated any tension.

Completely the opposite happens in Donizetti's *Belisario*, performed in concert in Bergamo, by way of a critical edition from the Donizetti Foundation and Festival. Yet again there is no audience. Riccardo Frizza reappears here and conducts with some spirit, bringing out Donizetti's dark scoring. The orchestra is onstage, with strings, wind and chorus separated by Perspex screens. Cleverly, the stalls have been emptied of seats and the soloists enter and exit into the empty space through the back, lining up to sing facing the orchestra. It creates an unexpected theatricality. Whoever came up with this idea is not named, but they should be acknowledged. Soprano Carmela Remigio and mezzo Annalisa Stroppa prove not just vocally assured but bring drama to Antonina and Irene respectively, both able to sustain their cantilenas but also spit out a line. Roberto Frontali's baritone is dry but he provides presence and pathos, if not drama. Celso Albelo offers tenorial ping as Alamiro. It is all idiomatic and surprisingly watchable. **ON**

Dido and Aeneas Purcell

Naxos NBD0140V



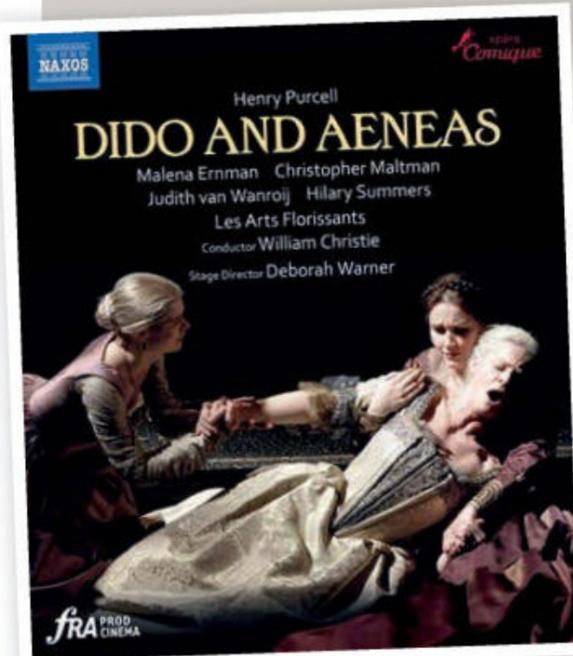
Sophistication can lurk in the utmost simplicity, and so it proves here, with a reissue of a classic production of *Dido and Aeneas* by Deborah Warner (filmed at the Opéra Comique in Paris, 2008). Warner creates an acting space not unlike the Globe in London, so that the singers are thrust into immediate engagement with the audience. She replaces the missing musical prologue with three short texts performed by Fiona Shaw – (Ted Hughes, T S Eliot and Yeats) – a mercurial delight in such accomplished hands. Otherwise the production is essentially traditional, with Dido particularly regal in a pastel brocade gown. It does not overplay its hand – but there is a fun nod to the premiere of *Dido* taking place in Josias Priest's girls' school, as a large group of gymslipped schoolgirls start the action and occasionally weave into the performance



with much noise and vigour as they galumph around. Yet again the booklet omits to say who they are collectively. Leftovers from a St Trinian's production? Escaped from school? Just rounded up in the street? Anyway, they have a whale of a time, particularly relishing the baddies (the Sorceress and witches are straight from Central Casting.) William Christie conducts Les Arts Florissants with grace, and the best compliment I can play is that I hardly noticed them, apart from enjoying a relatively fleet reading.

I was recently watching Julie Walters on film, in one of her serious roles, and realised that as she was completely silent and seemingly immobile she was in fact acting with her neck. I do realise that it is a very bizarre thing to claim, but almost imperceptibly she provided emotion by muscular tension and its subsequent release. And so it is here, with Malena Ernman. This assumption

is a great achievement. Ernman's Dido is almost self-effacing, certainly tentative, but once persuaded to succumb to her emotions she is suffused with love. Her final scene is extremely difficult to watch. Most opera singers die extravagantly and with some gusto; Ernman just seems to go somewhere else spiritually, slowly and calmly but inevitably. It certainly makes me feel that she has witnessed death and experienced loss. Her mezzo has a soft grain and she colours is with immense skill. It is a staggeringly complete performance; I consider it one of the best ever filmed. Alongside her, Christopher Maltman provides just the right amount of baritone swagger and charm and a soupçon of guilt as Aeneas. Hilary Summers whoops it up as the Sorceress, abetted by Céline Ricci and Ana Quintlans. Judith van Wanroij and Lina Markeby tenderly support Ernman through her emotional downfall. Diction throughout is faultless.



Again this rapture

By Fiona Hook

A new release from the London Philharmonic Orchestra conjures thrilling memories of the gleaming, lustrous voice of Jessye Norman at the peak of its powers, recorded live in concert in 1986

Jessye Norman's 1983 recording of Strauss *Vier letzte Lieder* (*Four Last Songs*) had already been hailed as a classic, so when she sang the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Covent Garden in 1985 expectations were running high. The opera's teasing blend of comedy and high tragedy suited the soprano to a tee – grandeur with a raised eyebrow. The following year lucky Londoners heard Norman sing yet more Strauss, both *Lieder* and opera, this time at the Royal Festival Hall. A new release from the London Philharmonic Orchestra gives us the opportunity to enjoy the concert anew, under the



R Strauss: Five Songs; *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*; *Salome* (excerpts)
 Jessye Norman, soprano
 London Philharmonic Orchestra/Klaus Tennstedt

CD: LPO0122
 Digital: LPO0122D



baton of Klaus Tennstedt, then the orchestra's principal conductor.

Norman bookends the concert, starting with five songs and finishing with the final scene from *Salome*. The first song, 'Cäcilie' was composed by Strauss as a wedding gift for his wife in 1894. Norman is in eager and extravagant mode as she pushes confidently through the phrasing to peak on a rapturous B above the stave, supported by Tennstedt's cushion of sound. (She chooses to sing the first two songs the wrong way round, following Op 20 No 2 with No 1. It makes more of an entrance.) 'Ruhe, meine Seehle' displays her dark-hued lower range, then 'Meinem Kinde' exhibits the glow of her middle voice. 'Wiegenlied' is perhaps the most considered reading, through which Norman drifts in a state of almost suspended ecstasy. The three verses are subtly differentiated, with the tender lullaby of the first transmuting into the more troubled anxiety of the second: conductor and soprano are punctilious in their observance of the differences of phrase that Strauss' rhythmic and harmonic changes elicit. The final hushed strophe is slower and ultimately brings with it a burst of great passion. Norman's voice is opulent yet restrained, supported by Tennstedt's shimmering strings – but she slowly builds the sound and tension,

culminating in a glorious F-sharp on 'Welt' in the final verse, a moment of true vocal luminosity. The final song, 'Zueignung', positively surges along with vibrancy of phrasing, and ends with a burst of delight for both soprano and audience. Throughout, Norman's enunciation of her texts lives up to her reputation for scrupulous diction.

But the jewel in the crown is the *Salome* scene – a role that Norman never essayed onstage, though she did record it under Seiji Ozawa a few years after this concert. Given the opulence of her instrument, it may seem that Norman would be hard pressed to convey the emotions of a teenage girl, albeit one who needs decibels to express her angst. But she certainly lightens the voice when required, and by the time she kisses the severed head of Jokanaan she is down to an exhausted whisper – an interpretative decision, not vocal depletion, I hasten to add. But Norman does still treat us to an avalanche of glorious sound. Perhaps the first B-flat is a little tight, but thereafter they blaze. Likewise, she has no trouble with the cruelly placed baritone low G flat thrown at her. Norman's ultimate vocal sweet spot seems to be around the aforementioned F-sharp at the top of the stave, and at her rapturous 'Du warst schön' her E-sharp is pure radiance. There is one strange moment when on a sustained G on the word 'Liebe' Norman flattens



Jessye Norman: 'An avalanche of glorious sound'

the note by a semitone, then comes back up to pitch. It sounds meant, but is not in the score. But her phrasing is awe-inspiring, and in her final bursts of ecstasy she takes lines in one breath where most sopranos gulp before the final sustained notes. Tennstedt follows the final bars of the opera as written, not the truncated concert ending.

In-between the songs and final scene come Strauss' Suite *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and the *Salome Dance of the Seven Veils*. The suite is particularly appropriate, as the piece had grown from work by the composer for incidental music for performances of the Molière play which would then be followed by the opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*; and *Ariadne* was the only complete Strauss role that Norman performed onstage. Ultimately Strauss deemed the whole event too long, so *Ariadne* was polished off and premiered in 1912 and five years later the otherwise redundant Suite was revealed in its neo-classical charm. The LPO plays it with a lightness of touch, contrasting with the chiaroscuro that Tennstedt brings to the *Salome* dance. The sound throughout is excellent. For fans of Jessye Norman this release is a must-have, and anyone who wants to hear Tennstedt leading his own orchestra is also in for a treat. **ON**

Two Handel cantatas newly released on the Pentatone label, *Armida abbandonata* and *Apollo e Dafne* were composed during and just after the composer's 1706-09 sojourn in Italy, and the influence of Italian opera seems inevitable and palpable. The music is dramatic and vital, and emotionally these two works are full-spectrum experiences; yet they are concise, offering a maximum of two characters and held within compact time-spans.

The format of the disc is to alternate orchestral works with vocal, so the little-known Overture HWV 336 (written in Italy, around 1707) is the starting point, crisp in its grand French Overture dotting and fascinating in its textures (particularly the bassoon pedals). The continuo here, as elsewhere on the disc, includes theorbo. Il Pomo d'Oro, under Francesco Corti, provides an impeccably disciplined performance, alive with the discovery of the new – this sense of discovery permeates the disc.

The more familiar *Armida abbandonata* (first performed 1707) takes its story from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. The lament 'Ah, crudele!' finds Kathryn Lewek in superb form, a very tasteful occasional vibrato contributing to the emotive weight. Lewek's held note before the return to the A section of this da capo aria is utterly remarkable, initially non-vibrato but with just a touch at the end as it moves from 'Ah' to 'crudele'.

Ornamentation is exquisitely natural as Armida admits defeat in her pursuit of Rinaldo. As the protagonist's emotions alchemically transform to anger, Lewek and Corti present Armida's ire viscerally. The Pentatone recording

By Colin Clarke

Two Italian cantatas by Handel are infused with the spirit of opera, especially in a new recording, full of a sense of drama and discovery

Love's triumphs and defeats

fully supports every furious detail – the rushing strings in the *Accompagnato* 'O voi, dell'inconstante e procelloso mare' offer a fine example.

It is an interesting decision to separate the Overture to the *Almira* Suite from the remaining six movements presented here, effectively prefacing both Cantatas with a single Overture. One hears the justification for this in the opening of the Chaconne from *Almira*, unfolding like a blossoming of a flower. The selection includes an 'African Dance' – a sprightly Rigaudon, garlanded with high flute; and an 'Asian Dance', actually the first occurrence of what would later attain fame as 'Lascia ch'io pianga' from *Rinaldo*.

The duet cantata *Apollo e Dafne* finds baritone John Chest in fine voice. He has recently been touring Handel *Theodora* with Il Pomo d'Oro, including at La Scala and in Vienna. The agile aria 'Spezzo l'arco e getta l'armi', with its prominent woodwinds, is particularly impressive, as is Christopher Palameta's oboe solo in the gently lilting soprano aria 'Felicissima quest'alma', where the oboe acts as a second duetting voice. Lewek's crowning moment is the aria 'Ardi adori e preghi

in vano', strong and resolute, Handel's large intervals a statement of determination.

In tandem, Lewek and Chest ('Una guerra ha dentro il seno') offer an ideal balance in their voices, with superb trills from Lewek. The somewhat uncomfortable (from today's perspective) interpersonal dynamics between Apollo and Dafne are viscerally tracked here, perhaps most remarkably in the duet plus oboe 'Deh, lascia addolcire', contrasted with Apollo's aria of chase, 'Mie piante correte'. Only the final aria (Apollo) disappoints a little ('Cara pianta'). By comparison, Nikolay Borchev with the Handelfestspielorchester Halle conducted by Bernhard Forck (on the AVI label) is significantly closer to the heart-based mark here.

In terms of comparisons elsewhere on record, honours are closely split between Lewek and Carolyn Sampson (The King's Consort/Robert King). Sampson's resonance with the text is arguably greater; but it is Lewek who better captures the heightened emotions of 'Venti, venti, fermate'.

Certainly, we have come a long way in performance terms since, for example, Helen Donath and Peter-Christoph

Runge's 1978 traversal of *Apollo e Dafne* (Phoenix Records). And while Mhairi Lawson and Callum Thorpe on the Linn label offer a good account, the present Pomo d'Oro performance supersedes it, with Chest a more interesting Apollo.

A most revitalising disc recorded in involving, detailed sound by producer Ken Yoshida. Full texts and translation (English only) are included, plus detailed booklet notes by Suzanne Aspden. A fine release. **ON**



Handel: *Armida abbandonata*; *Apollo e Dafne*; Overture & *Almira* Suite.

Kathryn Lewek (soprano); John Chest (baritone). Il Pomo d'Oro / Francesco Corti Pentatone PTC 5186965



A year in the life...

By Francis Muzzu

For the young Rossini, 1819 was a busy year as he went about establishing his reputation as Italy's foremost composer of his day. Three operas of varied quality emerged from his pen, now re-released in a single set by Opera Rara

In his Naples years Rossini specifically worked on pushing the boundaries of operatic structure, and 1819 brought a particular flurry of activity, with three operas composed for the San Carlo and one for La Scala. March 1819 saw the premiere of *Ermione*, starring top league singers: the stupendously talented Colbran, tenors Andrea Nozzari and Giovanni David, and mezzo Benedetta Rosmunda Pisaroni. It was not a hit. Perhaps the audience was flummoxed by its modernity: it had accompanied recitatives, often highly declamatory, and a grand structure of connected numbers, pushing opera on from its stop-start nature and into more continuous drama. *Ermione* disappeared until 1987, when an unprepared Monsterrat Caballé wandered vaguely through the title role at the Rossini Festival in Pesaro and was booed for her efforts, or lack thereof. The second opera, *Eduardo e Cristina*, was a rushed job, cobbled together in weeks from other operas, and doesn't belong here. But *La donna del lago*, (based on Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake*), followed in September with the same four stars. Structurally, Rossini played it safer with more arias, and also experimented with orchestral colours and the idea of musical motif with Elena's gentle aubade, which reappears more than once. This opera had a mixed reception at its premiere, but Rossini was already

rushing to Milan as he had a contract for a new opera there, producing *Bianca e Falliero* for Boxing Day, based on a little-known play by Arnault. It was a mild success, and went unperformed between a run in Sardinia in 1846 and its exhumation in 1986 in Pesaro. As the late author and critic Charles Osborne understated, 'it may not represent its composer at his highest level of invention'. Quite.

Opera Rara has rereleased its recordings of the three works and *Ermione* is the clear winner. The opera itself is riveting, with galvanic waves of emotion, and the title role is a gift to a charismatic soprano. Here she is Carmen Giannattasio, who is unfazed by the role's demands. She has not just a smoky, slightly veiled soprano, but bags of personality. *Ermione* is a conflicted woman, juggling her passions for two men, Pirro and Oreste, and violent in her mood swings. Giannattasio relishes every word and brings the character to vivid life. Paul Nilon and Colin Lee are the men who are caught in the headlights. Nilon's Pirro is certainly on top of the notes – the creator, Nozzari, had a phenomenal range – but there is a bleat to the voice. Lee is Oreste, created by David, and has a suitably sweeter voice and outstanding coloratura ability. His voice blends well with Giannattasio's, particularly in their final duet. Patricia Bardon is Andromache, in the opera a

character pushed to the side, but she seizes her chances and displays fluent passage work and a thrilling top. David Parry conducts the London Philharmonic Orchestra with élan and knows how to indulge his prima donna without losing control over the whole piece.

Maurizio Benini leads the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in *La donna del lago* and is very successful in bringing out its delicate *tinta* as well as its more rousing moments; this performance was recorded in concert. Giannattasio and Bardon reappear. The soprano is once again excellent right through to Elena's final rondo, a coloratura killer taken at quite a clip. Bardon has more of a character to sink her teeth into in the travesti role of Malcolm and proves worthy of its large range and technical hurdles. Her confident dismissal of the triplets in her second aria is astonishing. Kenneth Tarver and Gregory Kunde do the tenor honours here. Tarver gets the David role of Uberto (Giacomo, or James V of Scotland in disguise) and proves the most plangent of all tenors here. Kunde enjoys showing off his robust tenor and range, and plunges over the Rossinian top with some thrilling jumps across intervals. Their face-off leads to outrageously stratospheric vocal exhibitionism.

David Parry returns with the LPO for *Bianca e Falliero*, perhaps less successfully as at times the larger numbers

slightly run away from him, particularly the Act I finale. The opera presents a slew of notes, the printed score must be a blur of black. The soprano is Majella Cullagh. She has the technique but it is a strange voice. At half throttle it can be sweet and in her Act II duet she makes some lovely sounds. But as soon as pressure is applied the tone turns glassy and verges on acidic, particularly in its upper half. I suspect the role is too big for her despite her facility in the florid passages. The final aria is a rehash of Elena's and Cullagh sails through it. Her *Falliero* is mezzo Jennifer Larmore, another travesti role. Larmore really knows what she is doing and her tone has a keen edge and spacious line (including some remarkable phrasing and *messa di voce* in her long final aria). Her lithe voice does not blend comfortably with Cullagh's and in the more stressful moments of their final duet they unfortunately bring to mind the Cat's Duet (which, incidentally, was not Rossini's creation). Barry Banks is an adept tenor, unusually the father here rather than the love interest. His skill is impressive, his tone unalluring. Bass Ildebrando D'Arcangelo is luxury casting as failed suitor Capellio. **ON**

Ermione, La donna del lago & Bianca e Falliero

Three Rossini operas from 1819

Opera Rara – 8 CDs



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UNITED KINGDOM

CARDIFF

WELSH NATIONAL OPERA
www.wno.org.uk**Jenůfa** | Janáček
MAR 05, 12, 18

ON TOUR FROM MARCH-MAY

Conductor Tomáš Hanus
Stage director Katie Mitchell
Designer Vicky Mortimer
Lighting Designer Nigel Edwards

CAST

Jenůfa Elizabeth Llewellyn
Kostelnička Buryjovka Helena Zubanovich
Laca Peter Auty/Peter Berger
Števa Adam Gilbert

Madama Butterfly | Puccini
MAR 16, 19

THEN ON TOUR UNTIL MAY

Conductors Carlo Rizzi / James Southall
Stage director Lindy Hume
Lighting designer Elanor Higgins
Set designer Isabella Bywater
Choreographer Denni Sayers
Video Ash J Woodward

CAST

Cio-Cio-San Joyce El-Khoury / Alexia Voulgaridou / Meeta Raval
B.F. Pinkerton Leonardo Caimi / Peter Auty
Suzuki Anna Harvey / Kezia Bienek
Sharpless Mark Stone

Don Giovanni | Mozart
MAR 17

ON TOUR FROM MARCH-MAY

Conductor Tobias Ringborg
Stage director John Caird
Lighting designer David Hersey
Costume designers John Napier/Yoon Bae

CAST

Don Giovanni Andrei Kymach / Duncan Rock
Il Commendatore (Commendatore) James Platt
Donna Anna Marina Monzó / Linda Richardson
Don Ottavio Trystan Llŷr Griffiths
Donna Elvira Sarah Tynan / Meeta Raval

Máire Flavin as Alcina at Opera North



Leporello Simon Bailey/Joshua Bloom
Masetto James Atkinson
Zerlina Harriet Eyley/ Isabelle Peters

GLASGOW/EDINBURGH

SCOTTISH OPERA
www.scottishopera.org.ukNEW PRODUCTION
A Midsummer Night's Dream | Britten
Edinburgh MAR 01, 03, 05

Conductor Stuart Stratford
Director Dominic Hill
Set & Costume Designer Tom Piper
Lighting Designer Lizzie Powell

CAST

Oberon Lawrence Zazzo
Tytania Catriona Hewitson
Hippolyta Annie Riley
Lysander Elgan Llŷr Thomas

The Miserly Knight | Rachmaninov
Mavra | Stravinsky
Perth MAR 18

Double bill in concert performance at Perth Concert Hall

Conductor Stuart Stratford
Stage director Laura Attridge

CAST

includes Alexey Dolgov, Alasdair Elliott, Alexey Gusev, Anush Hovhannisyan, Alexander Krasnov, Sarah Pring

LEEDS

OPERA NORTH
www.operanorth.co.uk

Alcina | Handel
Salford Quays MAR 11
Theatre Royal, Nottingham MAR 17
Conductor Laurence Cummings

Stage director Tim Albery
Lighting designer Thomas C Hase
Costume & Set designer Hannah Clark
Set designer Hannah Clark
Video Ian Galloway

CAST

Alcina Máire Flavin / Sky Ingram
Morgana Fflur Wyn
Ruggiero Patrick Terry
Bradamante Joanna Motulewicz
Oronte Nick Pritchard

Carmen | Bizet

Salford Quays MAR 10

Theatre Royal, Nottingham MAR 18

Conductors Garry Walker / Antony Hermus / Harry Sever / Anthony Kraus
Stage director Edward Dick
Lighting designer Rick Fisher
Costume designer Laura Hopkins
Set designer Colin Richmond
Choreographer Lea Anderson

CAST

Carmen Chrystal E Williams
Don José Erin Caves
Micaëla Camila Titingier / Alison Langer
Escamillo Phillip Rhodes / Gyula Nagy

LONDON

ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA
www.eno.org**Così fan tutte** | Mozart
MAR 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22

Conductor Kerem Hasan
Stage director Phelim McDermott
Lighting designer Paule Constable / Kevin Sleep
Costume designer Laura Hopkins
Set designer Tom Pye
Translator Jeremy Sams

CAST

Fiordiligi Nardus Williams
Dorabella Hanna Hipp
Despina Soraya Mafi
Ferrando Amitai Pati
Guglielmo Benson Wilson
Don Alfonso Neal Davies

The Handmaid's Tale | Ruders
APR 04, 06, 08, 10, 12, 14

Conductor Joana Carneiro
Stage director Annilese Miskimmon
Lighting designer Paule Constable
Costume & Set designer Annemarie Woods

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

www.englishtouringopera.org.uk

SPRING TOUR 2022

La Bohème | Puccini

Hackney Empire, London **4 MAR**; Lighthouse, Poole **11 MAR**; Buxton Opera House **17, 18 MAR**; Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield **4 APR**; York Theatre Royal **8 APR**; Cambridge Arts Theatre **20, 22, 23 APR**; Storyhouse Chester **28 APR**. Tour continues to **3 JUN**

Conductor Dionysis Grammenos
Stage director James Conway
Set designer Florence de Maré
Lighting designer Mark Howland

CAST

Mimi (Mimi) Francesca Chiejina / Paula Sides
Rodolfo Luciano Botelho / Thomas Elwin
Musetta Jenny Stafford / April Koyejo-Audiger
Marcello Michel de Souza / Jerome Knox
Schaunard Themba Mvula
Colline Trevor Eliot Bowes

Le Coq d'or | Rimsky-Korsakov

Hackney Empire, London **05 MAR**; Lighthouse, Poole **12 MAR**; Buxton Opera House, **19 MAR**; Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield **05 APR**; Theatre Royal, York, **09 APR**; Arts Theatre, Cambridge **21 APR**; Storyhouse, Chester **29 APR**. Tour continues to **3 JUN**

Conductor Gerry Cornelius
Stage director James Conway
Set & Costume designer Amelia Hankin, Neil Irish
Lighting designer Rory Beaton

CAST

Le Coq d'Or Alys Mererid Roberts
King Dodon Grant Doyle
Prince Guidon Thomas Elwin

Johannes-Passion | Bach

The Priory Lancaster **24 MAR**; Cheltenham Town Hall, **28 MAR**; Sheffield University Firth Hall **03 APR**; Theatre Royal, York **06 APR**; Blackburn Cathedral **12 APR**

Conductor Jonathan Peter Kenny
Stage director James Conway

CAST

Sopranos Jenny Stafford / Luci Briginshaw
Contralto/Counter-tenor Martha Jones / Tim Morgan
Tenors Thomas Elwin / Richard Dowling
Basses Edward Hawkins / Jerome Knox / Bradley Travis

OPERA IN CONCERT

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

L'Allegro, il Aenseroso ed il Moderato | Handel
MAR 14

Conductor William Christie
Les Arts Florissants

CAST

Soprano Rachel Redmond
Tenor James Way

CADOGAN HALL

Oberto | Verdi
APR 03

Conductor Matthew Scott Rogers

CAST

Leonora Anush Hovhannisyan
Cuniza Carolyn Dobbin

CAST

OfFred Kate Lindsey
The Commander Soloman Howard
Aunt Lydia Emma Bell
Serena Joy Avery Amereau

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

www.roh.org.uk

Rigoletto | Verdi

MAR 08, 12

Conductor Stefano Montanari
Stage director Oliver Mears
Lighting designer Fabiana Piccioli
Costume designer Ilona Karas
Set designer Simon Lima Holdsworth
Choreographer Anna Morrissey

CAST

Duke of Mantua Javier Camarena
Rigoletto Luca Salsi
Gilda Rosa Feola
Sparafucile Evgeny Stavinsky

Peter Grimes | Britten

MAR 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 31

Conductor Sir Mark Elder
Stage director Deborah Warner
Lighting designer Peter Mumford
Costume designer Luis F. Carvalho
Set designer Michael Levine
Choreographer Kim Brandstrup

CAST

Peter Grimes Allan Clayton
Ellen Orford Maria Bengtsson
Auntie Catherine Wyn-Rogers
Niece I Jennifer France
Niece II Alexandra Lowe
Balstrode Bryn Terfel

La traviata | Verdi

APR 01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 09, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18

Conductor Renato Balsadonna / Giacomo Sagripanti
Stage director Richard Eyre
Lighting designer Jean Kalman
Costume & Set designer Bob Crowley
Choreographer Jane Gibson

CAST

Violetta Valéry Pretty Yende / Hrachuhí Bassénz
Alfredo Germont Dmytro Popov / Stephen Costello
Giorgio Germont Vladimir Stoyanov / Dimitri Platanias
Flora Bervoix Angela Simkin / Rachel Kelly

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON OPERA

www.ucopera.co.uk

Bloomsbury Theatre

La Naissance d'Osiris | Rameau

MAR 21-26

CAST

tba

EUROPE AUSTRIA

GRAZ

GRAZ OPERA

oper-graz.buehnen-graz.com

Morgen und Abend | Georg Friedrich Haas

MAR 02, 05, 13, 25; APR 06, 22, 24

Conductor Roland Kluttig
Stage director Immo Karaman
Lighting designer Daniel Weiss
Costume designer Fabian Posca
Set designer Rifail Ajdarasic
Video Philipp Fleischer

CAST

Erna Christina Baader
Signe Cathrin Lange
John Markus Butter
Peter Matthias Koziarowski

Schwanda the Bagpiper | Weinberger

MAR 11, 27; APR 03

Conductors Marius Burkert
Stage director Dirk Schmeding
Lighting designer Sebastian Alphons
Costume designer Frank Lichtenberg
Set designer Martina Segna

CAST

Švanda (Schwanda) Denis Milo
Dorotka Polina Pastirchak
Babinský Matthias Koziarowski
Královna Anna Brull

Les Pêcheurs de Perles | Bizet

MAR 12, 26; APR 01, 07

Conductor Marius Burkert
Stage director, Lighting & Set designer Ben Baur
Costume designer Uta Meenen
Dramaturge Jörg Rieker

CAST

Leïla Tetiana Miyus
Nadir Andrzej Lampert
Zurga Dariusz Perczak
Nourabad Daeho Kim

LINZ

LANDESTHEATER LINZ

www.landestheater-linz.at

Parsifal | Wagner

MAR 12, 27 APR 09, 16, 30
(CONTINUES UNTIL JUNE)

Director Stephan Suschke
Costume designer Angelika Rieck
Set designer Momme Röhrbein
Dramaturge Christoph Blitt

CAST

Parsifal Heiko Börner
Amfortas Martin AchRAINER
Titirel William Mason
Gurnemanz Michael Wagner
Klingsor Adam Kim
Kundry Katherine Lerner

Der Graf von Luxemburg | Lehár

MAR 06, 15, 17, 20, 23, 29;
APR 02, 08, 17, 25

Conductor Marc Reibel
Stage director Thomas Enzinger
Costume designer Götz Lanzelot Fischer
Set designer Bernd Franke
Choreographer Evamaria Mayer
Dramaturges Anna Maria Jurisch / Magdalena Hoisbauer

CAST

René, Count of Luxembourg Matjaž Stopinšek
Angèle Didier Ani Yorentz
Armand Brissard Johannes Strauß
Juliette Vermont Fenja Lukas

VIENNA

THEATER AN DER WIEN

www.theater-wien.at

Tosca | Puccini

MAR 03, 05

Conductor Marco Armiliato
Stage director Margarethe Wallmann
Costume & Set designer Nicola Benois

CAST

Flora Tosca Elena Stikhina
Mario Cavaradossi Vittorio Grigolo
Il Barone Scarpia Roberto Frontali



Schwanda the Bagpiper in Graz

Salomé | R Strauss**MAR 07, 11, 14, 16**

Conductor Thomas Guggeis
Stage director Boleslaw Barlog
Costume & Set designer Jürgen Rose

CAST

Salome Jennifer Holloway
Jochanaan John Lundgren
Herodes Wolfgang Ablinger-Sperrhacker
Herodias Clauahnke

Die Entführung aus dem Serail | Mozart**MAR 12, 15, 19, 22**

Conductor Antonello Manacorda
Stage director Hans Neuenfels
Lighting designer Stefan Bolliger
Costume designer Bettina Merz
Set designer Christian Schmidt

CAST

Konstanze Lisette Oropesa
Belmonte Daniel Behle
Blonde Regula Mühlemann
Pedrillo Michael Laurenz
Osmín Goran Jurić

Rigoletto | Verdi**MAR 20, 23, 26, 30**

Conductor Marco Armiliato
Stage director Pierre Audi
Lighting designer Bernd Purkrabek
Costume & Set designer Christof Hetzer

CAST

Il Duca di Mantova Francesco Demuro
Rigoletto Ludovic Tézier
Gilda Vera-Lotte Boecker
Sparafucile Evgeny Solodovnikov

Wozzeck | Berg**MAR 21, 24, 27, 31; APR 03**

Conductor Philippe Jordan
Stage director Simon Stone
Lighting designer James Farncombe
Costume designer Alice Babidge
Set designer Bob Cousins

CAST

Wozzeck Christian Gerhaher
Marie Anja Kampe
Tambourmajor Sean Panikkar
Hauptmann Jörg Schneider
Doktor Dmitry Belosselskiy

VIENNA STATE OPERAwww.wiener-staatsoper.at**L'elisir d'amore | Donizetti****MAR 02, 04, 06**

Conductor Marco Armiliato
Stage director Otto Schenk
Costume & Set designer Jürgen Rose

CAST

Adina Nina Minasyan
Nemorino Juan Diego Flórez
Belcore Sergey Kaydalov
Doctor Dulcamara Misha Kiria

WIENER VOLKSOPERwww.volksooper.at**Die Fledermaus | J Strauss II****MAR 11; APR 08, 16**

Conductor Alexander Joel



Vienna Volks Opera's Die Fledermaus

Stage director Heinz Zednik
Costume designer Doris Engl
Set designer Pantelis Dessyllas
Choreographers Lili Clemente / Susanne Kirnbauer

CAST

Gabriel von Eisenstein Carsten Süss
Rosalinde Ulrike Steinsky
Frank Josef Luftensteiner
Prinz Orlofsky Manuela Leonhartsberger
Alfred Mehrzad Montazeri
Dr Falke Alexandre Beuchat
Dr Blind Jeffrey Treganza
Adele Lauren Urquhart

Das Land des Lächens | Lehár**MAR 14, 17, 21, 24, 30**

Stage director Beverly Blankenship
Costume designer Elisabeth Binder-Neururer
Set designer Heinz Hauser
Choreographer Allen Yu

BELGIUM**ANTWERP/GHENT**

FLEMISH OPERA
www.operaballet.be

Così fan tutte | Mozart
MAR 04, 06 (GHENT)

CAST

Conductor Trevor Pinnock
Stage director Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker
Lighting, Dramaturge & Set designer Jan Versweyveld
Costume designer An D'Huys
Choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

CAST

Fiordiligi Robin Johannsen
Dorabella Anna Pennisi
Despina Hanne Roos
Ferrando Reinoud Van Mechelen
Guglielmo Edwin Crossley-Mercer
Don Alfonso Damien Pass

BRUSSELS

LA MONNAIE/DE MUNT
www.lamonnaie.be

Il trittico | Puccini**MAR 15, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 31;****APR 03, 06, 09**

Conductor Alain Altinoglu
Stage director Tobias Kratzer
Lighting designer Bernd Purkrabek
Costume & Set designer Rainer Sellmaier
Video Manuel Braun

CAST

Includes Péter Kálmán, Cornne Winters, Raehann Bryce-Davies & Benedetta Torre

LIÈGE

OPÉRA-ROYAL DE WALLONIE
www.operaliege.be

Rigoletto | Verdi**MAR 03, 04, 05, 06, 08, 10, 11, 12, 13**

Conductor Daniel Oren
Stage director John Turturro
Set designer Francesco Frigeri
Costume designer Marco Piemontese
Lighting designer Alessandro Carletti

CAST

Il Duca di Mantova Francesco Demuro / Iván Ayón Rivas
Rigoletto Carlos Álvarez / Amartuvshin Enkhbat
Gilda Maria Mudryak / Jodie Devos
Sparafucile Rubén Amoretti
Maddalena Sarah Laulan

CZECH REPUBLIC**BRNO**

JANÁČEK NATIONAL THEATRE

www.janacek-brno.cz**The Miracle of our Lady | Martinů****MAR 04**

Conductor Jakub Klecker
Stage director Jiří Heřman
Lighting designer Daniel Tesař
Costume designer Alexandra Grusková
Set designer Pavel Svoboda

CAST

Janáček Opera Ensemble

Cunning Little Vixen | Janáček**MAR 08; APR 19**

Conductors Marko Ivanović / Robert Kružík
Stage director Jiří Heřman
Lighting designer Daniel Tesař
Costume designer Alexandra Grusková
Set designer Dragan Stojčevski

CAST

Vixen Jana Šrejma Kačírková / Michaela Kušteková
Lišák (The Fox) Václava Krejčí Housková / Jana Hrochová
Forester's wife Martina Mádllová / Daniela Straková-Šedrlová
Forester Svatopluk Sem / Jiří Sulženko

The Greek Passion | Martinů**MAR 19, 27; APR 10**

Conductor Robert Kružík
Stage director Jiří Heřman
Costume designer Alexandra Grusková
Set designer Dragan Stojčevski
Choreographer Kateřina Nováčková
Dramaturge Patricie Částková

CAST

Manolios Harold Meers
Katerina Pavla Vykopalová
Panait Petr Levíček

Aida | Verdi**MAR 23**

Conductor Jakub Klecker
Stage director Václav Věžník
Set designer Vladimír Soukenka
Choreographer Zdeněk Prokeš

CAST

Aida Anda-Louise Bogza / Maida Hundeling
Radamès Gianluca Zampieri / Michal Lehotský
Amneris Veronika Hajnová
Ramfis Martin Gurbaľ / Jiří Sulženko >

PRAGUE

NATIONAL THEATRE
www.narodni-divadlo.cz

Macbeth | Verdi
MAR 06

Conductor Karl Heinz Steffens / Jiří Štrunc
Stage director Martin Čičvák
Costume designer Marija Havran
Set designer Hans Hoffer
Choreographer Tomáš Krivošík

CAST

Macbeth Maxim Aniskin
Lady Macbeth Anda-Louise Bogza
Banco Roman Vocel
Macduff Martin Šrejma
Malcolm Václav Sibera

Der ferne Klang | Schreker
MAR 20, 26, 29; APR 03, 10

Conductors Karl Heinz Steffens / Richard Hein
Stage director Timofej Kuljabin
Lighting designer Taras Mikhalevsky
Costume designer Vlada Pomirkovanaya
Set designer Oleg Golovko

CAST

Fritz Aleš Briscein
Grete Svetlana Aksenova / Kristýna Štarhová
Rudolf Jiří Hájek
Dr Vigelius Miloš Horák

Madama Butterfly | Puccini
MAR 24, 31; APR 05, 13, 16, 22

Conductor Maurizio Barbacini
Stage director Jiří Heřman
Lighting designer Daniel Tesař
Costume designer Alexandra Grusková
Set designer Jiří Heřman / Jan Lukášek
Dramaturges Patricie Částková / Ondřej Hučín

CAST

Cio-Cio-San Svetlana Aksenova
B.F. Pinkerton Peter Berger
Suzuki Jana Sýkorová / Michaela Zajmi

Così fan tutte | Mozart
MAR 26; APR 06

Conductor Karsten Januschke / Jan Chalupecký
Stage director Tatjana Gürbaca
Lighting designer Stefan Bolliger
Costume & Set designer Ingrid Erb
Dramaturge Beno Blachut

CAST

Fiordiligi Kateřina Kněžíková / Marie Fajtová
Dorabella Michaela Zajmi / Arnheidur Eiríksdóttir
Despina Pelageya Kurennaya / Yokiko Kinjo
Ferrando Petr Nekoranec / Martin Šrejma
Guglielmo Lukáš Bařák / Boris Prýgl
Don Alfonso Jiří Hájek / Jiří Sulženko

Rigoletto | Verdi
MAR 27, APR 01, 08, 14, 17, 30

Conductor Vincenzo Milletari
Stage directors Barbora Horáková / Joly

Richard Hein
Lighting designer Jan Dörner
Costume designer Annemarie Bulla
Set designers Sophia Schneider / Barbora Horáková / Joly
Choreographer Jan Adam
Dramaturge Jitka Slavíková

CAST

Rigoletto Nikoloz Lagvilava
Duke of Mantua Kyungho Kim
Gilda Marie Fajtová
Sparafucile Zdeněk Plechlvo Hrachovec
Maddalena Kateřina Jalovcová

Rusalka | Dvořák
APR 02, 12

Conductor Zbyněk Müller
Stage directors Jiří Heřman / Robert Jindra
Lighting designer Daniel Tesař
Costume designer Alexandra Grusková
Set designer Jaroslav Bönisch
Choreographer Jan Kodet

CAST

Rusalka Dana Burešová
Vodník František Zahradníček
Prince Aleš Briscein
Princess Jolana Fogašová

Jakobín | Dvořák
APR 09, 17

Conductor Zbyněk Müller
Stage director Jiří Heřman
Set designer Pavel Svoboda
Costume designer Alexandra Grusková
Lighting designer Daniel Tesař
Choreographer Lucie Holánková

CAST

Count Vilém of Harasov Jiří Sulženko
Bohuš of Harasov Roman Janál
Adolf of Harasov Jiří Hájek

DENMARK

AARHUS

DANISH NATIONAL OPERA
www.yske-opera.dk

Der Graf von Luxemburg | Lehár
MAR 11, 12, 17, 18, 19 (THEN ON TOUR)

Conductor Christopher Lichtenstein
Stage director Philipp Kochheim
Lighting designer Anders Poll
Costume & Set designer Barbara Bloch

CAST

René Graf von Luxemburg Joan Ribalta
Angèle Didier Birgitte Mosegaard Pedersen

COPENHAGEN

ROYAL DANISH OPERA
www.kglteater.dk

La bohème | Puccini
MAR 02, 08, 12, 16, 18, 22, 29; APR 07

Conductor Paolo Carignani
Stage director Elisabeth Linton
Lighting designer Ulrik Gad
Costume designer Magdalena Stenbeck

Choreographer Clara Svärd
Set designer Astrid Lyng Ottosen

CAST

Mimi Gisela Stille
Rodolfo Migran Agadzhanyan
Musetta Eldrid Gorset
Marcello Luthando Qave

Die Walküre | Wagner
MAR 06, 09, 13, 20, 24, 27

Conductor Thomas Søndergård
Stage director John Fulljames
Lighting designer D.M. Wood
Costume & Set designer Tom Scutt

CAST

Siegmond Bryan Register
Sieglinde Ann Petersen
Wotan Tomasz Konieczny
Brünnhilde Trine Møller
Hunding Morten Staugaard

ESTONIA

TALLINN

ESTONIAN NATIONAL OPERA
www.opera.ee

Don Pasquale | Donizetti
MAR 03, 13, 19, 30

Conductor Kaspar Mänd
Stage director Giorgio Bongiovanni
Lighting designer Claudio De Pace
Set designer Maria Carla Ricotti

CAST

Don Pasquale Pavlo Balakin
Norina Mirjam Mesak
Ernesto Mehis Tiits / Nico Darmanin

The Tsar's Bride | Rimsky-Korsakov
MAR 17, 25; APR 10

Conductor Kaspar Mänd
Stage director Yuri Alexandrov
Lighting designer Ritšard Bukin
Set designer Viktor Gerasimenko
Choreographer Marina Kesler

CAST

Yelisey Bomeliy Mart Madiste
Domna Ivanovna Saburova Heli Veskus
Dunyasha Juuli Lill
Grigory Grigoryevich Gryaznoy Rauno Elp



Don Pasquale in Tallinn

Malyuta Skuratov Pavlo Balakin

FINLAND

HELSINKI

FINNISH NATIONAL OPERA
www.oopperabaletti.fi

EURAJOKI FESTIVAL
Die Walküre | Wagner
MAR 04

Conductor Tarmo Peltokoski
Lighting, Video & Set designer Mikko Kiviharju

CAST

Siegfried Jyrki Anttila
Mime Kalle Virtanen
Wanderer Erik Rousi
Alberich Samuli Takkula

Salomé | R. Strauss
MAR 18, 22, 26, 30;
APR 01, 07, 20, 23, 27, 29

Conductor Hannu Lintu
Stage director Christof Loy
Lighting designer Olaf Winter
Costume designer Robby Duiveman
Set designer Johannes Leiacker

CAST

Salome Sara Jakubiak
Jochanaan Andrew Foster-Williams
Herodes Nikolai Schukoff
Herodias Karin Lovelius

Don Pasquale | Donizetti
MAR 31; APR 02, 05, 08, 28, 30

Conductor Alberto Hold-Garrido
Stage director Tuomas Parkkinen
Lighting designer William Iles
Costume designer Tuomas Lampinen
Set designer Hannu Lindholm

CAST

Don Pasquale Roberto de Candia
Norina Hanna Rantala
Ernesto Konu Kim
Doctor Malatesta Tomi Punkeri
Notary Johannes Vatjus

FRANCE

LIMOGES

OPERA DE LIMOGES
www.operalimoges.fr

Le voyage dans la lune | Offenbach

Conductor Pierre Dumoussaud
Stage director Olivier Fredj
Lighting designer Nathalie Perrier
Costume & Set designer Malika Chauveau

CAST

Le prince Caprice Violette Polchi
La princesse Fantasia Sheva Tehoval
Le roi Cosmos Erick Freulon
Microscope Eric Vignau
La reine Popotte Cécile Galois

LYON

OPÉRA DE LYON

www.opera-lyon.com

Irrelohe | Schreker

MAR 19, 22, 25, 27, 29; APR 02

Stage director Bernhard Kontarsky
Lighting designer Michael Bauer
Costume designer Moana Stemberger
Set designers David Bösch / Falko Herold

CAST

Graf Heinrich Tobias Hächler
Förster Piotr Micinski
Eva Ambur Braid
Die alte Lola Lioba Braun

MARSEILLE

OPÉRA DE MARSEILLE

www.opera.marseille.fr

Werther | Massenet

MAR 15, 17, 20, 22

Conductor Victorien Vanoosten
Stage director Bruno Ravella
Lighting designer Linus Fellbom
Costume & Set designer Leslie Travers

CAST

Werther Thomas Bettinger
Charlotte Antoinette Dennefeld
Sophie Ludivine Gombert
Albert Marc Scoffoni

MONTPELLIER

OPÉRA NATIONAL DE MONTPELLIER

www.opera-orchestre-montpellier.fr

Pelléas et Mélisande | Debussy

MAR 09, 11, 13

Conductor Kirill Karabits
Stage director Benjamin Lazar
Lighting designer Mael Iger
Costume designer Alain Blanchot
Set designer Adeline Caron

CAST

Pelléas Marc Mauillon
Mélisande Judith Chemla
Golaud Allen Boxer
Arkel Vincent Le Texier
Geneviève Elodie Méchain

NANTES

ANGERS NANTES OPÉRA

www.angers-nantes-opera.com

The Rake's Progress | Stravinsky

MAR 03, 05, 07, 09, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30

Conductors Grant Llewellyn / Rémi Durupt
Costume designer Chantal de la Coste
Set designer Chantal de la Coste-Messelière
Video Florent Fouquet
Lighting designer Lionel Spycher
Management Gildas Pungier
Stage direction Mathieu Bauer

CAST

Nick Shadow Thomas Tatzl
Sellem Christopher Lemmings



NICE

OPÉRA DE NICE

www.opera-nice.org

Phaëton | Lully

MAR 23, 25, 27

Conductor Jérôme Correas
Stage director Eric Oberdorff
Lighting designer Jean-Pierre Michel
Set & Costume designer Bruno de Lavenère

CAST

Phaëton Mark Van Arsdale
Libye Anna Reinhold
Théone Deborah Cachet

PARIS

CITÉ DE LA MUSIQUE

The Tsar's Bride | Rimsky-Korsakov
Concert Performance

MAR 12

Conductor Tugan Sokhiev

CAST

Yelisey Bomeliy Ivan Maximeyko
Domna Ivanovna Saburova
Elena Zelenskaya
Dunyasha Alina Chertash

OPÉRA ROYAL DE VERSAILLES

www.chateauversailles.fr

Atys | Lully

MAR 19, 20, 22, 23

Conductor Leonardo García Alarcón
Stage director Angelin Preljocaj
Lighting designer Eric Soyer
Costume designer Jeanne Vicérial
Set designer Prune Nourry
Choreographer Angelin Preljocaj

CAST

Le Temps Luigi De Donato

Love & Death | Locke

MAR 26, 27

Conductor Sébastien Daucé

Stage director Jos Houben/Emily Wilson
Lighting designer Christophe Schaeffer
Costume & Set designer Oria Puppo

CAST

Perrine Devillers, Lieselot De Wilde,
Yannis François,
Nicholas Merryweather,
Lucile Richardot, Antonin Rondepierre

PARIS OPERA (BASTILLE)

www.operadeparis.fr

Wozzeck | Berg

MAR 07, 10, 13, 16, 19, 24, 27, 30

Conductor Susanna Mälkki
Stage directors William Kentridge /
Luc de Wit
Lighting designer Urs Schönebaum
Costume designer Greta Goiris
Set designer Sabine Theunissen
Video Catherine Meyburgh / Kim Gunning

CAST

Wozzeck Johan Reuter
Marie Eva-Maria Westbroek
Tambourmajor John Daszak
Andres Tansel Akzeybek
Hauptmann Gerhard Siegel
Doktor Falk Struckmann

Cendrillon | Massenet

**MAR 23, 26, 29; APR 01, 04, 07, 10, 13,
16, 19, 22, 25, 28**

Conductor Carlo Rizzi
Stage director Mariame Clément
Lighting designer Ulrik Gad
Costume & Set designer Julia Hansen

CAST

Cendrillon Tara Erraught
Le Prince Charmant Anna Stephany
Madame de la Haltière Daniela
Barcellona

PARIS OPERA (GARNIER)

www.operadeparis.fr

Don Giovanni | Mozart

MAR 02, 06, 08, 11

Conductor Bertrand de Billy
Stage director & costumes Ivo van Hove
Sets & lighting Jan Versweyveld

CAST

Don Giovanni Christian Van Horn
Il Commendatore Alexander Tsymbalyuk
Donna Anna Adela Zaharia
Don Ottavio Pavel Petrov
Donna Elvira Nicole Car
Leporello Krzysztof Bączyk

A Quiet Place | Bernstein

**MAR 07, 09, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24,
26, 29, 30**

Conductor Kent Nagano
Stage director Krzysztof Warlikowski
Lighting designer Felice Ross
Costume & Set designer Małgorzata
Szczeńiak
Video Kamil Polak

CAST

Dinah Johanna Wokalek
Old Sam Russell Braun
Dede Patricia Petibon

STRASBOURG

OPÉRA NATIONAL DU RHIN

www.operanationaldurhin.eu

El amor brujo | de Falla **The Diary of one who Disappeared** **| Janáček**

MAR 15, 17, 20, 22, 24 (STRASBOURG)

APR 01, 03 (MULHOUSE)

Conductor Lukasz Borowicz
Stage director Daniel Fish
Lighting designer Stacey Derosier
Costume designer Doey Lüthi
Set designer Paul Steinberg

CAST

The Young Man Magnus Vigilius
Zefka Josy Santos

TOULOUSE

THÉÂTRE DU CAPITOLE

www.theatreducapitole.fr

Platée | Rameau

MAR 19, 20, 22-24

Conductor Hervé Niquet
Stage directors & Costume designers
Corinne Benizio / Gilles Benizio
Lighting designer Patrick Méeüs
Set designer Hernan Penuela
Choreographer Kader Belarbi

CAST

Platée Mathias Vidal
Jupiter Jean-Vincent Blot
Mercure Pierre Derhet
Junon Marie-Laure Garnier
Momus Jean-Christophe Lanièce

GERMANY

BERLIN

DEUTSCHE OPER

www.deutscheoperberlin.de

Lucia di Lammermoor | Donizetti

MAR 04, 06, 11

Conductor Christoph Gedschold
Stage director, Costume & Set Designer
Filippo Sanjust

CAST

Lucia Liv Redpath
Lord Enrico Ashton Ernesto Petti
Sir Edgardo di Ravenswood René Barbera
Lord Arturo Bucklaw Ya-Chung Huang

La bohème | Puccini

MAR 05, 07, 08

Conductor Ivan Repušić
Stage director Götz Friedrich
Lighting designer Stephen Watson
Costume designer Peter Sykora
Set designer Peter Sykora

CAST

Mimi Adriana Ferfecka
Rodolfo Joseph Calleja
Musetta Meechot Marrero
Marcello Markus Brück
Schaunard Joel Allison

Il viaggio a Reims | Rossini

MAR 19, 22, 25; APR 09

Conductor Yi-Chen Lin
Stage director Jan Bosse
Lighting designer Kevin Sock
Costume designer Kathrin Plath
Set designer Stéphane Laimé
Video Meika Dresenkamp

CAST

La Marchesa Melibea Maria Barakova
Madama Cortese Hulkar Sabirova
La Contessa di Folleville Marina Monzó

I vespri Siciliani | Verdi

MAR 20, 26, 31; APR 03 (RETURNS JUN)

Conductor Enrique Mazzola
Stage director Olivier Py
Lighting designer Bertrand Killy
Costume & Set designer Pierre-André Weitz
Dramaturge Jörg Königsdorf

CAST

La duchessa Elena Saioa Hernández
Guido di Monforte Thomas Lehman
Giovanni da Procida Roberto Tagliavini

Parsifal | Wagner

MAR 27; APR 02, 06

Conductor Axel Kober
Stage director Philipp Stölzl
Lighting designer Ulrich Niepel
Costume designer Kathi Maurer
Set designers Conrad Moritz Reinhardt / Philipp Stölzl

CAST

Parsifal Thomas Blondelle
Amfortas Samuel Dale Johnson
Titirel Tobias Kehrer
Gurnemanz Stephen Milling
Kundry Anja Harteros

Elektra | Strauss

CONTINUES IN APRIL

Conductor Juraj Valčuha
Stage director Kirsten Harms
Designer Bernd Damovsky

CAST

Elektra Catherine Foster
Klytämnestra Tanja Ariane Baumgartner
Chrysothemis Flurina Stucki
Aegisth Clemens Bieber
Orest Tobias Kehrer

KOMISCHE OPER, BERLIN

www.komische-oper-berlin.de

Ball im Savoy | Abraham

MAR 04, 07, 28; APR 23; MAY 03, 15

Conductor Adam Benzwi
Stage director Barrie Kosky
Lighting designer Klaus Grünberg
Costume designer Esther Bialas
Set designer Klaus Grünberg
Choreographer Otto Pichler

CAST

Marquis Arisitide de Faublas Christoph Späth
Madeleine Dagmar Manzel
Daisy Darlington Katharine Mehrling

Svanda Dudák | Weinberger

MAR 05, 11, 19, 26; APR 01, 10, 15 (JUL 08)

Conductor Ainars Rubikis



Stage director Andreas Homoki
Lighting designer Franck Evin
Costume designer Klaus Bruns
Set designer Paul Zoller
Choreographer Otto Pichler

CAST

Dorotka Kiandra Howarth
Babinsky Tilmann Unger
Švanda Daniel Schmutzhard

Orfeo ed Euridice | Gluck

MAR 06; JUL 03, 07

Conductor David Bates
Stage director Damiano Michieletto
Lighting designer Alessandro Carletti
Costume designer Klaus Bruns
Set designer Paolo Fantin
Choreographer Thomas Wilhelm
Dramaturge Simon Berger

CAST

Orfeo Carlo Vistoli
Euridice Nadja Mchantaf
Amore Josefina

Yevgeny Onegin | Tchaikovsky

MAR 08

Conductor Ainars Rubikis
Stage director Barrie Kosky
Lighting designer Franck Evin
Costume designer Klaus Bruns
Set designer Rebecca Ringst
Dramaturge Simon Berger

CAST

Yevgeniy Onegin Günter Papendell
Larina Stefanie Schaefer
Tatyana Ruzan Mantashyan
Olga Maria Fiselier
Filippjevna Margarita Nekrasova
Lensky Oleksiy Palchykov

Les contes d'Hoffmann | Offenbach

MAR 09, 13

Conductor Alevtina Ioffe
Stage director Barrie Kosky
Lighting designer Diego Leetz
Costume / Set designer Katrin Lea Tag
Dramaturge Ulrich Lenz

CAST

Hoffmann Thomas Thieme / Arturo Chacón-Cruz / Ric Furman

Les 4 Héroïnes, Olympia, Antonia

Sydney Mancasola
Nicklausse (Nicholas) Karolina Gumos

Die Zauberflöte | Mozart

MAR 12, 13; APR 28, 30

Conductor Dominic Limburg
Stage director Günter Krämer
Costume & Set designer Andreas Reinhardt

CAST

Tamino Attilio Glaser
Papageno Philipp Jekal
Pamina Valeriia Savinskaia
Queen of the Night Aleksandra Olczyk
Sarastro Tobias Kehrer
Papagena Meechot Marrero

STAATSOPER UNTER DEN LINDEN

L'elisir d'amore | Donizetti

MAR 04, 06, 09, 12

Conductor Speranza Scappucci
Stage director Percy Adlon
Lighting designer Franz Peter David
Costume designer Kathi Maurer
Set designer Frank Philipp Schloßmann

CAST

Adina Hera Hyesang Park
Nemorino Bogdan Volkov
Belcore Adam Kutny
Il dottore Dulcamara Erwin Schrott

Der Rosenkavalier | R. Strauss

MAR 20, 26, 30; APR 01, 03

Conductor Simone Young
Stage director André Heller
Lighting designer Olaf Freese
Costume designer Arthur Arbesser
Set designer Xenia Hausner
Video Günter Jäckle / Philip Hillers

CAST

Feldmarschallin Camilla Nylund
Baron Ochs Christof Fischesser
Octavian Michèle Losier
Faninal Thomas Oliemans
Sophie Siobhan Stagg

MUNICH

BAYERISCHE STAATSOPER

www.staatsoper.de

Peter Grimes | Britten

MAR 03, 06, 10, 13 (& JUL 09, 12)

Conductor Edward Gardner
Stage director Stefan Herheim
Lighting designer Phoenix
Costume designer Esther Bialas
Set designers Stefan Herheim / Silke Bauer

CAST

Peter Grimes Stuart Skelton
Ellen Orford Rachel Willis-Sørensen
Balstrode Iain Paterson

Jonny spielt auf | Krenek

MAR 11, 14, 20, 24, 31 (RETURNS IN MAY)

Conductor Michael Brandstätter
Stage director Peter Lund
Lighting designer Michael Heidinger
Costume designer Daria Kornysheva
Set designer Jürgen Kirner

Choreographer Karl Alfred Schreiner

CAST

Die Sängerin Anita Mária Celeng / Camille Schnoor
Der Komponist Max Alexandros Tsilogiannis
Der Violinvirtuose Daniello Mathias Hausmann
Der Jazzband-Geiger Jonny Ludwig Mittelhammer

Lucia di Lammermoor | Donizetti

MAR 12, 16, 19, 24

Conductor Evelino Pidò
Stage director Barbara Wysocka
Lighting designer Rainer Casper
Costume designer Julia Kornacka
Set designer Barbara Hanicka
Video Andergrand Media+Spektakle

CAST

Lucia Nadine Sierra
Lord Enrico Ashton Andrzej Filończyk
Sir Edgardo di Ravenswood Xabier Anduaga
Lord Arturo Bucklaw Galeano Salas

La Cenerentola | Rossini

MAR 18, 21, 23, 25

Conductor Michele Spotti
Stage director, Costume & Set designer Jean-Pierre Ponnelle

CAST

Angelina Marianne Crebassa
Don Ramiro Edgardo Rocha
Dandini Jarrett Ott
Don Magnifico Renato Girolami
Clorinda Emily Pogorelc
Tisbe Yajie Zhang
Alidoro Erwin Schrott

L'infidelta delusa | Haydn

MAR 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 29

Conductor Giedrė Šlekytė
Stage director Marie-Eve Signeyrole
Costume designer Yashi Tabassomi
Set designer Fabien Teigné
Video Marie-Eve Signeyrole / Laurant La Rosa

CAST

Vespina Jasmin Delfs
Nanni Emily Sierra
Sandrina Jessica Niles

STUTTGART

STAATSOPER STUTTGART

www.staatsoper-stuttgart.de

The Love of Three Oranges | Prokofiev

FEB 08, 12

Conductor Killian Farrell
Stage director Axel Ranisch
Lighting designer Reinhard Traub
Costume designers Bettina Werner / Claudia Irro
Set designer Saskia Wunsch

CAST

Korol Tref Goran Jurić
Prinz Kai Kluge
Prinzessa Clarice Helene Schneiderman
Truffaldino Daniel Kluge

Juditha Triumphans | Vivaldi**FEB 11; MAR 06, 10, 12**

Conductor Benjamin Bayl
 Stage director Silvia Costa
 Lighting designer Bernd Purkrabek

CAST

Juditha Rachael Wilson
Holofernes Stine Marie Fischer
Vagaus Diana Haller

Boris Godunov | Mussorgsky**MAR 05, 20, 27, 30**

Conductor Titus Engel
 Stage director Paul-Georg Dittrich
 Lighting designer Reinhard Traub
 Costume designer Pia Dederichs
 Set designer Joki Tewes
 Video Vincent Stefan

CAST

Boris Godunov Adam Palka
Fyodor Alexandra Urquiola
Kseniya Carina Schmieger

HUNGARY**BUDAPEST****HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA**www.opera.hu**Der Schauspieldirektor | Mozart****The Telephone | Menotti****MAR 01-04, 07-11 (RETURNS MAY 22)**

Details tba

Pelléas et Mélisande | Debussy**MAR 04, 06, 12**

Conductor Frédéric Chaslin
 Stage directors Kirsten Dehlholm / Marie Dahl
 Lighting designer Jesper Kongshaug
 Costume designer Maja Ziska / Marta Twarowska
 Video Adam Ryde Ankarfeldt

CAST

Pelléas Zsolt Haja
Mélisande Polina Pasztircsák
Golaud István Kovács
Arkel Péter Fried
Geneviève Andrea Meláth

Hunyadi László | Erkel**MAR 11, 13, 15, 17, 23, 27**

Conductor Balázs Kocsár
 Stage director Szilveszter Ókovács

CAST

Hunyadi László Szabolcs Brickner
László V Daniel Patak
Count Ulrik András Pallerdi
Szilágyi Erzsébet Klára Kolonits

Die Frau ohne Schatten | Strauss**MAR 18, 20, 25, 31; APR 02, 07, 09**

Conductor Stefan Soltesz
 Stage director János Szikora
 Costume designer Kati Zoób
 Set designer Balázs Horesnyi
 Dramaturge János Matuz

CAST**Der Kaiser** István Kovácsházi**Die Kaiserin Eszter Sümegi**

Nurse Ildikó Komlósi

The Fairy Queen | Purcell**MAR 18, 20, 25, 27; APR 01, 03**

Costume designer Krisztina Lisztopád
 Set designers András Almási-Tóth / Sebastian Hannak
 Choreographer Kristóf Widder

CAST

Drunken Poet Péter Fried
First Fairy Rita Rác
Chinese Man Tibor Szappanos

IRELAND**DUBLIN****IRISH NATIONAL OPERA**www.irishnationalopera.ie**Carmen | Bizet****MAR 07, 09, 11, 12**

Conductor Kenneth Montgomery
 Stage director Paul Curran
 Lighting designer Paul Hackenmueller
 Costume & Set designer Gary McCann
 Choreographer Muirne Bloomer

CAST

Carmen Paula Murríhy
Don José Dinyar Vania
Micaëla Celine Byrne
Escamillo Milan Siljanov

ISRAEL**TEL AVIV****ISRAELI OPERA**www.israel-opera.co.il**Tosca | Puccini****MAR 03, 05**

Conductor Zubin Mehta

CAST

Floria Tosca Jennifer Rowley
Mario Cavaradossi Jorge de León
Il Barone Scarpia Devid Cecconi



Jennifer Rowley stars as Tosca with the Israeli Opera

Le nozze di Figaro | Mozart**MAR 27-29, 31; APR 01, 02, 04, 06, 08**

Conductor Michele Gamba
 Stage director David Pountney
 Lighting designer Keren Granek
 Costume designer Ula Shevtsov
 Set designer Leslie Travers

CAST

Figaro Cody Quattlebaum / Ross Ramgobin
Susanna Daniela Skorka / Shira Patshornik
Count Almaviva Theo Hoffman / Oded Reich
Countess Almaviva Alla Vasilevitsky / Tal Bergman
Cherubino Anat Czarny / Tal Ganor

ITALY**FLORENCE****TEATROPERA DI FIRENZE**www.teatroverdifirenze.it/en/**L'amico Fritz | Mascagni****MAR 01, 03, 06, 09, 12**

Conductor Riccardo Frizza
 Stage director Rosetta Cucchi
 Lighting designer Daniele Naldi
 Costume & Set designer Gary McCann

CAST

Fritz Charles Castronovo
Suzel Salome Jicia
Beppe Teresa Iervolino

GENOA**TEATRO CARLO FELICE**www.teatrocarlofelice.com**Manon Lescaut | Puccini****MAR 25-27; APR 01-03**

Conductor Donato Renzetti
 Stage director Davide Livermore
 Set designers Giò Forma / Davide Livermore
 Costume designer Giusi Giustino

CAST

Manon Lescaut Maria José Siri / Monica Zanettin
Des Grieux Marcelo Álvarez / Riccardo Massi / Francesco Pio Galasso
Lescaut Stefano Antonucci / Enrico Marabelli
Geronte Matteo Peirone

MILAN**TEATRO ALLA SCALA**www.teatroallascala.org**Queen of Spades | Tchaikovsky****MAR 05, 08, 13, 15**

Conductor Valéry Gergiev
 Stage director Matthias Hartmann
 Lighting designer Mathias Märker
 Costume designer Malte Lübben
 Set designer Volker Hintermeier

CAST

Herman Najmiddin Mavlyanov
Tomsky Roman Burdenko

Yeletsky Alexey Markov**Chekalinsky Yevgeny Akimov****Countess Olga Borodina**

Liza Asmik Grigorian / Elena Guseva

Adriana Lecouvreur | Cilea**MAR 04, 06, 09, 10, 12, 16, 19**

Conductor Giampaolo Bisanti
 Stage director David McVicar
 Lighting designer Adam Silverman
 Costume designer Brigitte Reiffenstuel
 Set designer Charles Edwards
 Choreographer Andrew George

CAST

Adriana Lecouvreur Maria Agresta / Anna Netrebko
Maurizio Freddie De Tommaso / Yusif Eyvazov
Michonnet Alessandro Corbelli / Ambrogio Maestri
La principessa di Bouillon Anita Rachvelishvili / Elena Zhidkova

Don Giovanni | Mozart**MAR 27, 29, 31; APR 02, 05, 10, 12**

Conductor Pablo Heras-Casado
 Stage director Robert Carsen
 Lighting designer Robert Carsen / Peter van Praet
 Costume designer Brigitte Reiffenstuel
 Set designer Michael Levine

CAST

Don Giovanni Christopher Maltman
Il Commendatore Günther Groissböck / Jongmin Park
Donna Anna Hanna-Elisabeth Müller
Don Ottavio Bernard Richter
Donna Elvira Emily D'Angelo
Leporello Alex Esposito

ROME**TEATRO DELL'OPERA**www.operaroma.it**Turandot | Puccini****MAR 12, 19, 22, 24-27, 29, 30, 31**

Conductor Oksana Lyniv
 Stage director Ai Weiwei
 Lighting designer Peter van Praet
 Costume & Set designer Ai Weiwei
 Video Ai Weiwei

CAST

Turandot Oksana Dyka / Ewa Vesin
Calaf Bryan Hymel / Arsen Soghomonyan
Liù Francesca Dotto / Adriana Ferfecka
Timur Antonio Di Matteo / Marco Spotti

TURIN**TEATRO REGIO**www.teatroregio.torino.it**Norma | Bellini****MAR 12, 15, 18, 20, 23, 26**

Conductor Francesco Lanzillotta
 Stage director Lorenzo Amato
 Lighting designer Vincenzo Raponi
 Costume designer Franca Squarciapino
 Set designer Ezio Frigerio

CAST

Norma Gilda Fiume
Adalgisa Annalisa Stroppa
Pollione Dmitry Korchak

VENICE

TEATRO LA FENICE
www.teatrolafenice.it

WORLD PREMIERE

La baruffe | Battistelli
MAR 02, 04

Conductor Enrico Calessio
 Stage director Damiano Michieletto
 Costume designer Carla Teti
 Set designer Paolo Fantin

CAST

Padron Toni Alessandro Luongo
Checca Silvia Frigato
Madonna Pasqua Valeria Girardello

LITHUANIA

RIGA

LITHUANIAN NATIONAL OPERA
www.opera.lt

Duke Bluebeard's Castle | Bartók

Conductors Robertas Servenikas / Julius Geniušas
 Stage director Csaba Káel
 Lighting designer Marc Heinz
 Costume designer Tatyana van Walsum
 Set designer Boris Kudlička
 Video Mikolaj Molenda

CAST

Judit Monika-Evelin Liiv
Bluebeard Liudas Mikalauskas

NETHERLANDS

AMSTERDAM

DUTCH NATIONAL OPERA
www.operaballet.nl

Orfeo ed Eurydice | Gluck
MAR 05, 08, 10, 13, 15, 17

Conductor Erik Nielsen

CAST

Orfeo André Schuen
Euridice Julia Kleiter

Eurydice – Die Liebenden Blind | Trojahn

MAR 05, 17

Conductor Erik Nielsen
 Stage director Pierre Audi

CAST

Orpheus André Schuen
Eurydice Julia Kleiter
Pluto Thomas Oliemans

Denis and Katya | Philip Venables
 (part of Opera Forward Festival)

MAR 11, 14, 16, 18

Conductor Tim Anderson
 Stage director Ted Huffman
 Set & Lighting designer Andrew Lieberman
 Costume designer Raphaela Rose
 Video Pierre Martin

NORWAY

OSLO

NORWEGIAN OPERA
www.operaen.no

Jenůfa | Janáček

MAR 12, 16, 19, 25, 29, 31; APR 06, 09

Conductor Robert Jindra
 Stage director Keith Warner
 Lighting designer John Bishop
 Costume designer Julia Mürer
 Set designer Jason Southgate

CAST

Jenůfa Cornelia Beskow
Štaňenka Buryjovka Rosalind Plowright
Laca Michael Weinius
Števa Thomas Atkins
Kostelnička Susan Bullock

POLAND

WARSAW

POLISH NATIONAL OPERA
teatr Wielki.pl

The Haunted Manor | Moniuszko
MAR 09, 10, 11

Conductor Piotr Staniszewski
 Stage director David Pountney
 Lighting designer Fabrice Kebour
 Costume designer Marie-Jeanne Lecca
 Set designer Leslie Travers

CAST

Stefan Dominik Sutowicz / Paweł Skałuba
Zbigniew Artur Janda / Paweł Horodyski
Jadwiga Elzbieta Wroblewska / Katarzyna Szymkowiak
Hanna Ania Jeruc / Gabriela Gołaszewska

Barbara Radziwiłłówna | Jarecki
MAR 13

Conductor Marta Kluczyńska

CAST

Królowa Bona Sforza Malgorzata Walewska
Zygmunt August Lukasz Załęski
Gasztołd Simon Mechliński

Die Zauberflöte | Mozart
MAR 22, 23

Conductor Piotr Staniszewski
 Stage director Suzanne Andrade/
 Barrie Kosky
 Lighting designer Diego Leetz
 Designer Esther Bialas

CAST

Tamino Emil Ławecki
Papageno Kamil Zdebel
Pamina Sonia Warzyńska-Dettlaff

Queen of the Night Aleksandra Olczyk
Sarastro Lukasz Konieczny
Papagena Aleksandra Orłowska
Monostatos Mateusz Stachura

WROCLAW

OPERA WROCLAWSKA
www.opera.wroclaw.pl

Manon | Massenet

MAR 26, 27, 30; APR 01-03

Conductor Michał Klauza
 Stage, Lighting & Set director Waldemar Zawodziński
 Costume designer Maria Balcerek

CAST

Manon Lescaut Ekaterina Siurina / Hanna Sosnowska
Lescaut Simon Mechliński / Mariusz Godlewski
Le Comte des Grieux Jerzy Butryn / Jakub Michalski
Le Chevalier des Grieux Charles Castronovo

ROMANIA

BUCHAREST

ROMANIAN NATIONAL OPERA
www.operanb.ro

Lohengrin | Wagner

MAR 25; APR 20

Conductor Tiberiu Soare
 Stage director Silviu Purcărete
 Set & Lighting designer Dragoș Buhagiar

CAST

Lohengrin Daniel Magdal
Heinrich der Vogler Marius Bolos
Elsa OfrimLulia Isaev
Friedrich Valentin Vasiliu / Cătălin Țoropoc
Ortrud Madeleine Pascu / Sidonia Nica

RUSSIA

MOSCOW

BOLSHOI THEATRE
bolshoi.ru

Let's make an Opera (The Little Sweep) | Britten

MAR 18, 19, 20

Conductor Ayrat Kashaev
 Stage director Oleg Dolin
 Lighting designer Narek Tumanyan
 Costume designer Evgenia Panfilova
 Set designer Oleg Dolin

CAST

Black Bob Anatoly Zakharov
Clem Pyotr Melentyev
Miss Baggott Olga Deineka-Boston

L'Heure espagnole | Ravel & Maddalena | Prokofiev

MAR 24, 25, 26, 27

Conductor Alexey Vereshchagin
 Stage director Vladislavs Nastavševs
 Lighting designer Anton Stikhin

CAST

Torquemada Igor Vyalykh
Concepción Anna Bauman
Gonzalve Peter Melentyev
Ramiro Vasily Sokolov

Rusalka | Dvorák

MAR 30, 31

Conductor Ainars Rubikis
 Stage director Timofey Kulyabin
 Set designer Oleg Golovko
 Costume designer Galja Solodovnikova
 Lighting designer Damir Ismagilov
 Video Alexander Lobanov

NOVAYA OPERA

www.novayaopera.ru

The Tsar's Bride | Rimsky-Korsakov

MAR 19, 20 (RETURNS IN MAY)

Conductor Vasily Valitov
 Stage director Yuri Grymov
 Lighting designer Sergey Martynov
 Costume designer Maria Danilova
 Set designer Vladimir Maximov

CAST includes

Yelisey Bomeliy Alexander Tyupa

SLOVENIA

LJUBLJANA

SLOVENIAN NATIONAL OPERA

www.opera.si

Faust | Gounod

MAR 17-19, 21-26

Conductor Ayrton Desimpelaere
 Stage director Frank Van Laecke
 Lighting designers Marc Heinz / Jasmin Šehić
 Costume designer Yan Tax
 Set designer Paul Gallis

CAST

Faust Aljaž FarasinIrakli Murjikneli / Branko Robinšak
Méphistophélès Saša Čano / Peter Martinčič / Luka Ortar
Marguerite Rossana Potenza / Martina Zadro

I Capuleti e I Montecchi | Bellini

MAR 31; APR 01, 02

Conductor Roberto Gianola
 Stage director Frank Van Laecke
 Lighting designers Frank Van Laecke / Jasmin Šehić
 Costume designer Belinda Radulović
 Set designer Philippe Miesch

CAST

Romeo Nuška Drašček / Irena Parlov
Giulietta Urška Arlič Gololičič / Nina Dominko / Štefica Stipančević
Tebaldo Aljaž Farasin / Edvard StrahDejan / Maksimilijan Vrbančič

SPAIN

BARCELONA

TEATRO LICEU

www.liceubarcelona.cat

Pelléas et Mélidande | Debussy

MAR 03, 06, 08, 11, 15, 18

Conductor Josep Pons
 Stage director Alex Ollé
 Lighting designer Marco Filibeck
 Costume designer Lluç Castells
 Set designer Alfons Flores

CAST

Pelléas Stanislas de Barbeyrac**Mélisande** Julie Fuchs**Golaud** Sir Simon Keenlyside**Arkel** Franz-Josef Selig**Geneviève** Dame Sarah Connolly**The Monster in the Maze** | Dove

MAR 05, 10, 13

Conductor Manuel Valdivieso
 Stage director Paco Azorín
 Costume designer Anna Güell
 Set designer Paco Azorín
 Video Pedro Chamizo

CAST

Minos Marc Pujol**Theseus** Roger Padullés**Daedalus** Elías Benito-Arranz**Theseus' mother**

Gemma Coma-Alabert

MADRID

TEATRO REAL

www.teatroreal.es

Lakmé | Delibes

Concert Performance

MAR 01, 03

Conductor Leo Hussain

CAST

Lakmé Sabine Devieille**Gérald** Xavier Anduaga**Nilakantha** Stéphane Degout**Tabaré** | Bréton

MAR 04, 06

Conductor Ramón Tebar

CAST

Tabaré Andeka Gorrotxategi**Blanca** Maribel Ortega**Yamandú** Juan Jesús Rodríguez**The Fiery Angel** | Prokofiev

MAR 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31; APR 01, 03-05

Conductor Gustavo Gimeno
 Stage director Calixto Bieito
 Lighting designer Franck Evin
 Costume designer Ingo Krüglér
 Set designer Rebecca Ringst
 Video Sarah Derendinger

CAST

Ruprecht Leigh Melrose / Dimitris Tiliakos**Renata** Ausrine Stundyte / Elena

Popovskaya

www.operanow.co.uk



The Fiery Angel in Madrid

SWEDEN

STOCKHOLM

ROYAL SWEDISH OPERA

www.operan.se

WORLD PREMIERE

The Promise | Gothe

MAR 05

Conductors Stefan Solyom / Alan Gilbert
 Stage director Stefan Larsson
 Lighting designer Torben Lendorph
 Costume designer Nina Sandström
 Set designer Sven Haraldsson
 Video Andrea Grettve

CAST

Ava Hanna Husáhr**Suor Angelica, Gianni Schicchi** | Puccini

MAR 19, 21, 23, 26; APR 05, 11, 13, 19, 25 (& MAY)

Conductor Paolo Carignani
 Stage director Wilhelm Carlsson
 Set & Costume designer Marcus Olson
 Lighting designer Markus Granqvist

CAST

Suor Angelica Camilla Tilling / Yana Kleyn**La Zia Principessa** Katarina Leoson**La Badessa** Annica Nilsson**Gianni Schicchi** Jeremy Carpenter**Lauretta** Hanna Husáhr

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA

GRAND THÉÂTRE DE GENÈVE

www.gtg.ch

Sleepless | Eötvös

MAR 29, 31; APR 02, 03, 05

Conductor Peter Eötvös /
 Maxime Pascal

Stage director Kornél Mundruczó

Lighting designer Felice Ross

Costume designer Monika Pormale

Set designer Monika Pormale

Dramaturge Kata Wéber

CAST

Alida Victoria Randem**Asle** Linard Vrielink**Ma Herdis** Katharina Kammerloher**Midwife** Katharina Kammerloher**Old Woman** Hanna Schwarz

ZURICH

ZURICH OPERA

www.opernhaus.ch

L'Italiana in Algieri | Rossini

MAR 06, 08, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 25, 31; APR 05

Conductor Gianluca Capuano

Stage directors Moshe Leiser /

Patrice Caurier

Lighting designer Christophe Forey

Costume designer Auguste Cavalca

Set designer Christian Fenouillat

CAST

Isabella Cecilia Bartoli / Nadezhda

Karyazina

Lindoro Lawrence Brownlee**Mustafá** Ildar Abdrazakov**Taddeo** Nicola Alaimo**Macbeth** | Verdi

MAR 09, 18, 20, 23, 26, 29; APR 01

Conductor Nicola Luisotti

Stage director Barrie Kosky

Lighting designer Klaus Grünberg

Costume designer Klaus Bruns

Set designers Klaus Grünberg / Anne Kuhn

CAST

Macbeth George Petean**Lady Macbeth** Veronika Dzhioeva/

Anna Netrebko

Banco (Banquo) Vitalij Kowaljow**Macduff** Omer Kobiljak /

Benjamin Bernheim

L'Olimpiade | Pergolesi

MAR 12, 13, 16, 19

Conductor Ottavio Dantone

Stage director David Marton

Lighting designer Henning Streck

Costume designer Tabea Braun

Set designer Christian Friedländer

Video Sonja Aufderklamm

CAST

Clistene Carlo Vincenzo Allemano**Aristea** Joëlle Harvey**Argene** Lauren Snouffer**Lcidas** Anna Bonitatibus

NORTH AMERICA

USA

CHICAGO

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

www.lyricopera.org

Fire Shut up my Bones | Blanchard

MAR 24, 27; APR 02, 06, 08

Conductor Daniela Candillari

Stage directors James Robinson /

Camille A Brown

Lighting designer Christopher Akerlind

Costume designer Paul Tazewell

Set designer Allen Moyer

CAST

Destiny Jacqueline Echols**Loneliness/ Greta** Jacqueline Echols**Billie** Latonia Moore

DALLAS

DALLAS OPERA

www.dallasopera.org

Flight | Dove

MAR 04, 06, 09, 12

Conductor Emmanuel Villaume

Stage director Kristine McIntyre

Costume designer Jonathan Knipscher

Set designer Kristine McIntyre

CAST

The Immigration Officer Zachary James**The Flight Controller** Jessica Pratt**The Refugee** John Holiday**Older Woman** Karita Mattila

DENVER

OPERA COLORADO

www.operacolorado.org

The Shining | Moravec

MAR 01, 03, 04, 06

Conductor Ari Pelto

Stage directors Eric Simonson /

David Radamés Toro

CAST
Jack Torrance Edward Parks
Wendy Torrance Kelly Kaduce
Mark Torrance Troy Cook

LOS ANGELES

PACIFIC OPERA PROJECT
Iolanta | Tchaikovsky
MAR 20, 26, 27

Conductor Isaac Selya
 Stage director Josh Shaw

CAST
Iolanta Cristina Jones
René Andrew W Potter
Robert Simon Barrad
Ibn-Hakia Adam Cioffari

NEW YORK

METROPOLITAN OPERA
www.metopera.org

Ariadne auf Naxos | Strauss
MAR 01, 05, 08, 12, 17

Conductor Marek Janowski
 Stage director Elijah Moshinsky
 Lighting designer Gil Wechsler
 Costume & Set designer Michael Yeargan

CAST
Ariadne Lise Davidsen
Bacchus Brandon Jovanovich
Zerbinetta Brenda Rae
Harlekin Sean Michael Plumb
Der Haushofmeister Thomas Allen

Don Carlos | Verdi
MAR 03, 06, 10, 13, 18, 22, 26

Conductors Yannick Nézet-Séguin / Patrick Furrer
 Stage director David McVicar
 Lighting designer Adam Silverman
 Costume designer Brigitte Reiffenstuel
 Set designer Charles Edwards

CAST
Philippe II Eric Owens
Elisabeth de Valois Sonya Yoncheva
Don Carlos Matthew Polenzani
La princesse Eboli Elina Garanča
Rodrigue Etienne Dupuis
Le Grand Inquisiteur John Relyea

Rodelinda | Handel
MAR 11, 15, 19, 24, 27, 31

Conductor Harry Bicket
 Stage director Stephen Wadsworth
 Lighting designer Peter Kaczorowski
 Costume designer Martin Pakledinaz
 Set designer Thomas Lynch

CAST
Rodelinda Elza van den Heever
Bertarido Iestyn Davies
Grimoaldo Paul Appleby
Eduige Jamie Barton

Madama Butterfly | Puccini
MAR 19, 23, 26, 30; APR 03, 19, 22, 27, 30 (& DATES IN MAY)

Conductor Alexander Soddy
 Stage directors Anthony Minghella / Carolyn Choa

Choreographer Carolyn Choa
 Lighting designer Peter Mumford
 Costume designer Han Feng
 Set designer Michael Levine

CAST
Cio-Cio-San Eleonora Buratto
B.F. Pinkerton Brian Jagde
Suzuki Elizabeth DeShong
Sharpless David Bizic
Il principe Yamadori Thomas Glass

Yevgeny Onegin | Tchaikovsky
MAR 25, 29; APR 02, 07, 10, 14

Conductor James Gaffigan
 Stage director Deborah Warner
 Set designer Tom Pye
 Costume designer Chloe Obolensky
 Choreographer Kim Brandstrup
 Lighting designer Jean Kalman

CAST
Yevgeny Onegin Igor Golovatenko
Tatyana Ailyn Pérez
Olga Varduhi Abrahamyan
Yevgeny Onegin Igor Golovatenko
Lensky Piotr Beczala
Prince Gremin Ain Anger

CARNEGIE HALL
www.carnegiehall.org

Wozzeck | Berg
MAR 15

Concert performance
 Conductor Andris Nelsons
 Orchestra Boston Symphony Orchestra

CAST
Wozzeck Bo Skovhus
Marie Christina Goerke
Tambourmajor Christopher Ventris
Andres Mauro Peter
Doktor Franz Hawlata

Answers to
 Opera Now's
 February 2022
 Quiz

- 1 **Gloriana**, Britten, about Elizabeth I
- 2 King Arthur; both operas are called **Arthur**
- 3 Elizabeth I
- 4 **Richard III**, 2005
- 5 **Mary**, Queen of Scots (Niedermeyer, *Marie Stuart*, 1844; Musgrave, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, 1977)
- 6 **Robert the Bruce** (*Robert Bruce*, 1843)
- 7 **I puritani**, Bellini, 1835 ('Dear Puritani')
- 8 **Henrietta Maria** (widow of Charles I) appears as **Enrichetta di Francia**
- 9 **Mary I: Maria, regina d'Inghilterra**, Pacini, 1843
- 10 **Queen Isabella**. Confusing, as she was Edward III's mother, not wife.
- 11 **James King**
- 12 **Mary, Queen of Scots** insults Elizabeth I, in *Maria Stuarda*, Donizetti, 1835

ASIA PACIFIC
 AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY

OPERA AUSTRALIA
opera.org.au

Otello | Verdi
MAR 02, 05, 08, 12, 16, 19

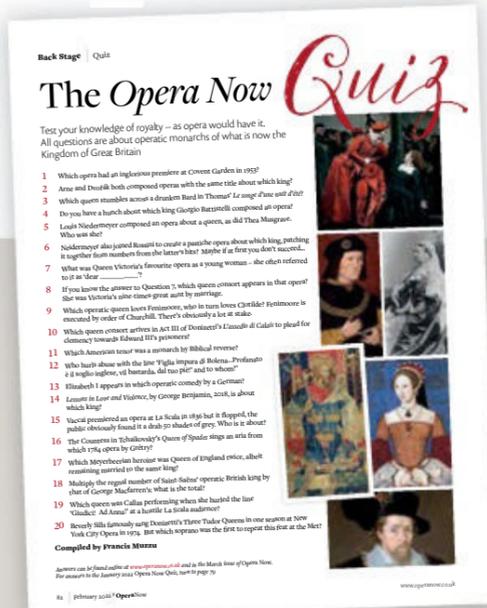
Conductor Andrea Battistoni
 Stage directors Harry Kupfer / Luke Joslin
 Lighting designer Toby Sewell
 Costume designer Yan Tax
 Set designer Hans Schavernoch

CAST
Otello Yonghoon Lee
Desdemona Karah Son
Iago Marco Vratogna

La Juive | Halévy
MAR 09, 12, 15, 18, 22, 24, 26

Conductor Carlo Montanaro
 Stage directors Olivier Py / Constantine Costi
 Lighting designer Bertrand Killy
 Costume & Set designer Pierre-André Weitz

CAST
Rachel Natalie Aroyan
Eléazar Diego Torre
Prince Léopold Shanul Sharma / Virgilio Marino
La princesse Eudoxie Esther Song



JAPAN

TOKYO

NEW NATIONAL THEATRE
www.nntt.jac.go.jp

La traviata | Verdi
MAR 10, 13, 16, 19, 21

Conductor Andriy Yurkevych
 Stage director Vincent Boussard
 Lighting designer Guido Levi
 Costume designer Vincent Boussard
 Set designer Vincent Lemaire

CAST
Violetta Valéry Anita Hartig
Alfredo Germont Matteo Desole
Giorgio Germont Gezim Myshketa

Lohengrin | Wagner
MAR 25, 26, 27; APR 03

Conductor Marek Janowski
 Stage director Katharina Wagner

CAST
Heinrich der Vogler Tareq Nazmi
Lohengrin Vincent Wolfsteiner
Elsa von Brabant Marita Sølberg
Friedrich von Telramund Egils Silins
Ortrud Elena Zhidkova

TOKYA BUNKA KAINAN
 Spring Festival in Tokyo
Lohengrin | Wagner
MAR 25-27; APR 03

Conductor Marek Janowski
 Stage director Katharina Wagner

CAST
Lohengrin Vincent Wolfsteiner
Heinrich der Vogler Tareq Nazmi
Elsa von Brabant Marita Sølberg
Friedrich von Telramund Egils Silins
Ortrud Elena Zhidkova

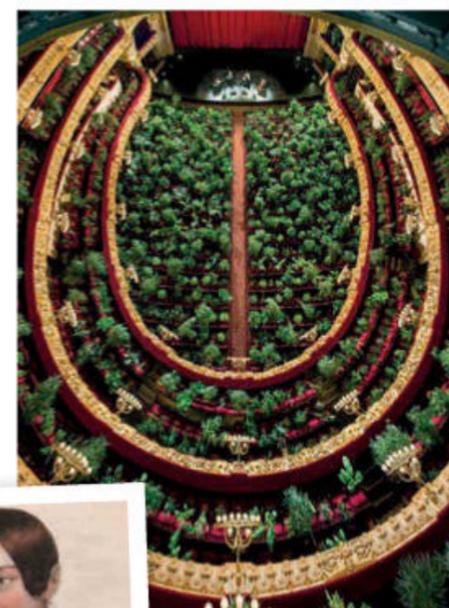
- 13 **Merrie England**, by Edward German, 1902
- 14 **Edward II**
- 15 **Lady Jane Grey**, *Giovanna Grey*
- 16 **Richard Cœur-de-lion** (*Richard the Lionheart*)
- 17 **Margaret of Anjou** (*Margherita d'Anjou*, 1820); her husband, Henry VI, was deposed in 1461 but restored to the throne in 1470
- 18 **8x2=16. Henry VIII** (1883) x **Charles II** (1849)
- 19 **Anne Boleyn** (*Anna Bolena*, Donizetti, 1830)
- 20 **Sondra Radvanovsky** (*Anna Bolena, Maria Stuarda* and *Roberto Devereux* in the 2015-16 season)

The Opera Now

Quiz

Do you know your Puccini from your Ponchielli? Test your wits in this month's set of fiendish questions for the dedicated opera buff...

- 1 What is the name of the heroine in Beethoven's only opera?
- 2 In *Rigoletto* the Duke launches the quartet singing 'Bella figlia dell'amore'. Who is he singing to?
- 3 Who is the only reigning monarch to feature in a Puccini opera?
- 4 250g chopped pimiento + 250g chopped tomato + 150g rice, served with chopped shallots and a curried vinaigrette. Sounds awful (blame Escoffier). What is it?
- 5 Which Verdi opera features the problematic impersonation of King Stanislaus I of Poland?
- 6 In which opera does the public prosecutor Fouquier-Tinville send the hero to his death?
- 7 Whose husband gives birth to 40,049 children in one day? "Cher public, faites des enfants!"
- 8 Rossini's *Semiramide* and Verdi's *Abigaille* both sing in which botanical Wonder?
- 9 Wagner's *Meistersingers* maintained the traditions of the medieval *Minnesänger*, who appear in which opera by the same composer?
- 10 Which opera features a singing teapot, Chinese cup, armchair, dragonfly, squirrel, frog and bat?
- 11 Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II supposedly complained "There are too many notes" to which composer?
- 12 Which opera is the true story of "The best dressed woman in the West", who married Colorado silver magnate Horace Tabor, went from rags to riches and back again, and died in penury, freezing to death in 1935 aged 81.
- 13 Who composed *Marie Victoire*? Its world premiere was in 2004 in Rome.
- 14 Fill in the blank to complete the sequence: On board a ship en route to Cornwall; a castle in Cornwall; _____
- 15 Which monarch appears in Lortzing's *Zar und Zimmermann*, Meyerbeer's *L'étoile du nord* and Donizetti's *Il falegname di Livonia* and *Il borgomastro di Saardam*?
- 16 Caroline Unger created roles for Bellini and Donizetti (including in the aforementioned *Il borgomastro*): singing at a premiere in 1824, she reputedly turned which composer round to face the tumultuous applause, and why?
- 17 When the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona reopened after its first lockdown in June 2020, every seat in the house was taken but there was no social distancing and no masks. Why?
- 18 Multiply the titular number of Laura Kaminsky's 2014 opera with that of Michel van der Aa's 2002 chamber opera. What is the total?
- 19 How well do you know Verdi's *Don Carlos*? (French or Italian answers are acceptable)
 - Who were Élisabeth de Valois' parents?
 - By what name is the Princess of Melito and Duchess of Pastrana known in the opera?
 - How does Philippe II reward Rodrigue for his loyalty in taking Carlos' sword from him at the auto-da-fé?
 - Philippe oppresses which area that Rodrigue idealistically champions?
 - Who does the mysterious monk turn out to be?
- 20 Which Handel heroine (or not) turns her lovers into anything that takes her fancy: animal, vegetable or mineral?



Compiled by Francis Muzzu

Answers can be found online at www.operanow.co.uk and in the April issue of Opera Now. For answers to the February 2022 Opera Now Quiz, turn to page 78

My favourite things

LAURENCE CUMMINGS



ROBERT WORKMAN

Conductor, harpsicordist and organist Laurence Cummings (54) is a leading interpreter of Baroque opera, and especially the works of Handel. He is currently director of the Göttingen Handel Festival in Germany and of the Academy of Ancient Music, based in the UK. A brilliant scholar of Early Music, Cummings is William Crotch Professor of Historical Performance at the Royal Academy of Music. He lives with his husband, opera and theatre director Martin Parr, and their son Riley

Favourite time of day?

Last thing at night reflecting on everything that's happened in the day and looking forward to the next day.

Favourite season?

It used to be summer, now it's autumn. I still love the summer because it's so full of life, vim, vigour and fun but there's something about the autumn with everything going a little quieter and more reflective and also seeing the fruits of the labours. I think it's moving to the country, actually.

Favourite colour?

Blue. Partly because it's my little boy Riley's favourite colour. I like wearing blue, I like seeing blue. I wear a lot of bright blue and my palette goes as far as aquamarine... I'm in Portugal at the moment doing a project for a new Baroque orchestra in the Algarve – their concert dress is blue or green as a reminder of the sea.



Favourite artist?

I fell in love with Turner's paintings when I was a teenager. I love Rothko and quite a lot of contemporary artists. I also love Vermeer and Hogarth. I love art because it's something I don't know a lot about – it does in a sense what music does to me which is give me a human context around a period of time or a theme. It brings my awareness to things in a way that tickles my brain.

Favourite building?

Aston Hall in Birmingham – bizarrely right next door to Aston Villa football ground. It's got a long gallery which I remember being taken to as a child for a concert. It's

a breathtaking Jacobean house right next to Spaghetti Junction – so bonkers.

Favourite animal?

Dog.

Favourite wellbeing secret?

Working out, but not necessarily gym based. It sounds ridiculous, keeping fit like in a 1950s *Carry On* film.....

Favourite possession?

My harpsichord.

Favourite drink?

The first cup of tea of the day.



Favourite food?

Sunday roast. Martin (husband) cooks it, I help with the chopping....

Favourite restaurant?

Riley loves either Pizza Express or Nando's. And I love Nando's because they just let you get on with it.

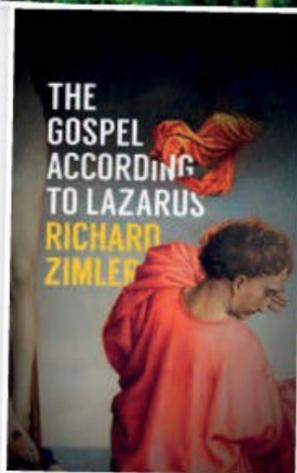
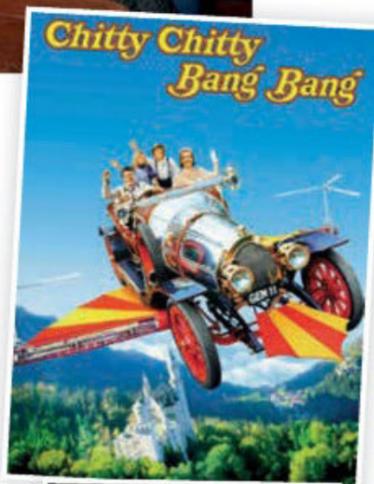
Favourite pub?

It used to be the Lord Palmerston, a gastro pub on Dartmouth Park Hill in Tufnell Park when we lived on the unfashionable side of Hampstead Heath...



Favourite TV show?

Gogglebox – I think they're all hilarious and what I love about it is getting to see what other people are watching on TV so you can have some cultural reference because I never really watch TV so it's a very good catch up... otherwise, I often watch things three years after everyone else then I can binge on them specially on the day of a concert.....



Favourite film?

Strictly Ballroom, Mary Poppins and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Favourite book/author?

In my late teens and 20s it was definitely E M Forster. Now I read a lot of crime fiction so P D James and Ruth Rendall because I find it very good escapism. My favourite book that I read recently was *The Gospel according to Lazarus* by Richard Zimler – this was a book to savour.



Favourite composer?

Handel – It sounds so vanilla – the order is Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart. Handel just understands the human condition so well and I think he's always speaking to me. And there's that extraordinary emotional understanding without slathering you in it.

Favourite city?

London – though we moved from London to the countryside in 2020. I'm from Birmingham, and I wanted to live in London ever since I was about 10.



Favourite holiday destination?

The Algarve. We had the most perfect holiday two years ago – I'd just done *Saul* at Glyndebourne and we treated ourselves. That's why I was quite keen to do this orchestra there...

Favourite sport?

Tennis. I play a little bit – it's my aspirational sport and I love Wimbledon.

Favourite theatre?

The London Palladium, because my father took me there when I was 10 to see *The King and I* with Yul Brynner and Virginia McKenna and I just loved the whole experience. We lost my dad when I was 12, so it was the last big 'going out memory' I have with him. And my favourite opera house is Glyndebourne. I was asked to be the senior coach on the tour of *Theodora* in the 1990s and I've been very fortunate to have been involved in so many Handel and Purcell productions since then.

Favourite item of clothing?

My wedding suit. It's really nothing special. I have worn it a lot and it's past its best. It made us laugh because we chose it from Marks and Spencer not realising that it was the same as David Beckham and the England squad were wearing for the Olympics in 2012 – it was so unlikely for us that it was hilarious!



What are your plans in March?

Alcina with Opera North, which started in Leeds on 5 February and is currently on tour around the North of England. You can watch a live streaming of it on www.operavision.eu ON

Interview by Louise Flind



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FLORENCE

29 & 30 APRIL
VENICE

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Anush Hovhannisyan Johannes Kammler
Faik Mansuroğlu Svetlina Stoyanova

VENUES

THE PALAZZO CORSINI AL PRATO, FLORENCE
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DRESS CODE

Evening Dress

CONTACT

For further details about the programme and tickets,
please contact the team at the Mascarade Opera Foundation by emailing
info@mascaradeoperastudio.it.