

March 8

## La Traviata

Sonya Yoncheva sings one of opera's most beloved heroines, the tragic courtesan Violetta, a role in which she triumphed on the Met stage in 2015, opposite Michael Fabiano as her lover, Alfredo, and Thomas Hampson as his father, Germont. Carmen Giannattasio sings later performances of the title role opposite Atalla Ayan, with the great Plácido Domingo as Germont. Nicola Luisotti conducts.

Verdi's *La Traviata* survived a notoriously unsuccessful opening night to become one of the best-loved operas in the repertoire. Following the larger-scale dramas of *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*, its intimate scope and subject matter inspired the composer to create some of his most profound and heartfelt music. The title role of the "fallen woman" has captured the imaginations of audiences and performers alike with its inexhaustible vocal and dramatic possibilities and challenges. Violetta is considered a pinnacle of the soprano repertoire.



March 22

## Idomeneo

Mozart's first operatic masterpiece returns to the Met in the classic Jean-Pierre Ponnelle production, conducted by Music Director Emeritus James Levine. The superb ensemble includes Matthew Polenzani as the king torn by a rash vow; mezzo-soprano Alice Coote in the trouser role of his noble son Idamante; soprano Nadine Sierra as Ilia; and soprano Elza van den Heever as the volatile Elettra, who loves Idamante to the bounds of madness.

Like many stories from Greek myth, *Idomeneo* explores the motivations and emotions of humans whose fates seem beyond their own control. The opera casts these issues within the framework of the opera seria genre, a stylized format popular in the 18th century that is characterized by a succession of arias and recitatives and a cast of noble characters. Long neglected along with other works of this era, *Idomeneo* now holds a firm place in the repertoire as the first of Mozart's operatic masterpieces.



April 19

## Eugene Onegin

Tchaikovsky's setting of Pushkin's timeless verse novel is presented on the Met stage in Deborah Warner's moving production, starring Anna Netrebko and Dmitri Hvorostovsky as Tatiana and Onegin. Alexey Dolgov sings the role of Lenski, and Robin Ticciati conducts.

Tchaikovsky's many moods—tender, grand, melancholy—are all given free rein in *Eugene Onegin*. The opera is based on Pushkin's iconic verse novel, which re-imagines the Byronic romantic anti-hero as the definitive bored Russian aristocrat caught between convention and ennui; Tchaikovsky, similarly, took Western European operatic forms and transformed them into an authentic and undeniably Russian work. At the core of the opera is the young girl Tatiana, who grows from a sentimental adolescent into a complete woman in one of the operatic stage's most convincing character developments.



May 10

## Der Rosenkavalier

The dream cast of Renée Fleming as the Marschallin and Elīna Garanča as Octavian star in Strauss's grandest opera. In his new production, Robert Carsen, the director behind the Met's recent *Falstaff*, places the action at the end of the Habsburg Empire, underscoring the opera's subtext of class and conflict against a rich backdrop of gilt and red damask, in a staging that also stars Günther Groissböck as Baron Ochs. Sebastian Weigle conducts the sparklingly perfect score.

The opera is originally set in Vienna in the 1740s. Genuine historical references are merged with fictitious inventions (like the "noble custom" of the presentation of the silver rose to a fiancée, which never actually existed) and anachronisms (like the Viennese Waltz, which did not yet exist at that time). It's a mixture that creates a seductive mythical landscape, a ceremonious and impossibly beautiful Vienna-that-never-was. The Met's new production moves the setting to the last years of the Habsburg Empire.

Music historian **Jeffrey Engel** will present each opera talk, offering historical context for the composer and the opera stories. A graduate of Ithaca College, a cellist and teacher, Mr. Engel brings a rich knowledge of music history to each lecture, with musical excerpts.



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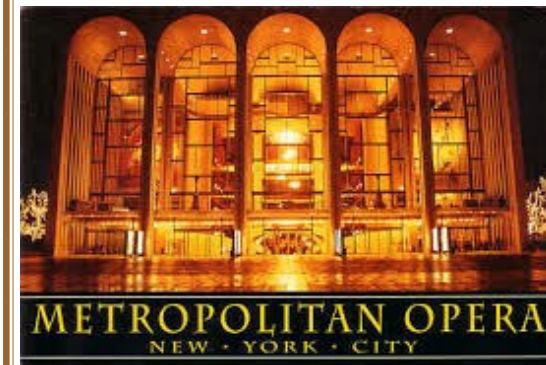
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# OPERA TALKS 2016 - 2017



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## METROPOLITAN OPERA

October 5

### *Tristan und Isolde*

*Tristan und Isolde* opens the Met season in a new production by Mariusz Trelński (the director responsible for the 2014 - 15 season's double bill of *Iolanta* and *Bluebeard's Castle*), and will be well served by a cast of outstanding Wagnerians: Nina Stemme as Isolde, Stuart Skelton as Tristan, Ekaterina Gubanova as Brangäne, and René Pape as King Marke, with Sir Simon Rattle conducting, in one of his rare appearances at the Met.

Wagner's breathtaking meditation on love and death holds a unique place in the opera world. Its music has astounded, infuriated, and inspired audiences since it was first heard, and the title roles are acknowledged as among the most extraordinarily demanding in opera. The vocal challenges, the sumptuous symphonic scale of the orchestral writing, and the mystical nature of the story, with its opportunities for creative visual design, make this awe-inspiring work a phenomenon of the repertory.



October 19

### *Don Giovanni*

Three charismatic singers, Simon Keenlyside, Ildar Abdrazakov, and Mariusz Kwiecien, share the role of the title hero, who goes to hell in a dazzling coup de théâtre.

The ensemble of great Mozartean singers includes Isabel Leonard, Angela Meade, Matthew Polenzani, Marina Rebeka, Erwin Schrott, Ramón Vargas, and Rolando Villazón. Fabio Luisi and Plácido Domingo conduct.

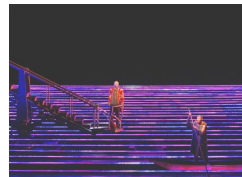
Aided by his ingenious librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart approached his operatic retelling of the Don Juan myth from a point of view that is neither tragic nor entirely comic, but rather lighthearted, urbane, and ironic. We follow the title character and his earthy comic sidekick, Leporello, through a series of encounters that begins with a fatal duel, moves back and forth between the humorous and the sentimental, and ends with the protagonist being dragged down to hell.



December 7

### *L'Amour de Loin*

Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho's breakthrough opera was described by the New York Times as "transfixing...a lushly beautiful score." Commissioned by the Salzburg Festival, where it was first seen in 2000, it will now finally have its Metropolitan Opera premiere in a dazzling new production by Robert Lepage, featuring glimmering ribbons of LED lights that extend across the length of the stage and over the orchestra pit. Eric Owens is the knight on a quest of love and Susanna Phillips is his lover on the other side of the sea. Conductor Susanna Mälkki makes her Met debut.



2017

January 4

### *Nabucco*

The legendary Plácido Domingo brings another new baritone role to the Met under the baton of his long-time collaborator James Levine. Liudmyla Monastyrska is Abigaille, the warrior woman determined to rule empires, and Jamie Barton is the heroic Fenena. Dmitri Belosselskiy is the stentorian voice of the oppressed Hebrew people.



The success of Verdi's third opera, a stirring drama about the fall of ancient Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (*Nabucco*), catapulted the 28-year-old composer to international fame. The music and Verdi himself were subsumed into a surge of patriotic fervor culminating in the foundation of the modern nation of Italy. Specifically, the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves ("Va, pensiero"), in which the Israelites express their longing for their homeland, came to stand for the country's aspirations for unity and that exciting era in Italian history, the Risorgimento, or "Resurgence."

January 18

### *Roméo et Juliette*

When Diana Damrau and Vittorio Grigolo starred opposite each other in *Manon* at the Met in 2015, the New York Times said, "the temperature rises nearly to boiling every time Damrau and Grigolo are on stage together." Now they're back as opera's classic lovers, in Gounod's lush Shakespeare adaptation. The production, by director Bartlett Sher, has already won acclaim for its vivid 18th-century milieu and stunning costumes during runs at Salzburg and La Scala. Gianandrea Noseda conducts the sumptuous score.

Perhaps the most enduringly successful of the many operatic settings of the world's consummate love story, *Roméo et Juliette* is an excellent example of French Romanticism, a tradition that values subtlety, sensuality, and graceful vocal delivery over showy effects. In the opera there is a slight shift of focus away from the word games of the original play and a greater focus on the two lovers, who are given four irresistible duets, including a brief final reunion in the tomb scene that does not appear in the play.



February 22

### *Rusalka*

Kristine Opolais stars in the role that helped launch her international career, the mythical Rusalka, who sings the haunting "Song to the Moon." Mary Zimmerman brings her wondrous theatrical imagination to Dvořák's fairytale of love and longing, rejection and redemption. Brandon Jovanovich, Jamie Barton, Katarina Dalayman, and Eric Owens complete the all-star cast, and Mark Elder conducts.

The only one of Dvořák's operas to gain an international following (so far), *Rusalka* is in many ways a definitive example of late Romanticism—containing folklore, evocations of the natural and the supernatural worlds, and even a poignant interpretation of the idea of a love-death. The story has a strong national flavor as well as universal appeal, infused by the Romantic supernaturalism of Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's novella *Undine* (previously set as an opera by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Tchaikovsky, and others) and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*.