

## January 30 *Carmen*

Composer: Georges Bizet

*World premiere: Opéra Comique, Paris, 1875.*

Bizet's masterpiece of the gypsy seductress who lives by her own rules has had an impact far beyond the opera house. The opera's melodic sweep is as irresistible as the title character herself, a force of nature who has become a defining female cultural figure. *Carmen* was a scandal at its premiere but soon after became a triumphal success and has remained one of the most frequently staged operas in the world.



## February 27

### *La Fille du Régiment*

Composer: Giuseppe Verdi

*World Premiere: Opéra Comique, Paris, 1840.*

This frothy comedy mixes humor with a rush of buoyant melody and notorious vocal challenges. The story concerns a young orphan girl raised by an army regiment as their mascot and begins at the moment of her first stirrings of love. Complications (and comedy) ensue when her true identity is discovered. The action is startlingly simple and unencumbered by intricate subplots, allowing the full charm of the characters and their virtuosic music to come across in an uninhibited way.



## March 27 *Die Walküre*

Composer: Richard Wagner

*World Premiere: Court Theater, Munich, 1870.* The second opera in Wagner's monumental Ring cycle, *Die Walküre* has long



stood on its own as an evening of extraordinarily powerful theater. Part of this appeal lies in its focus on some of the Ring's most interesting characters at decisive moments of their lives: Wotan, the leader of the gods; his wife, Fricka; his twin offspring, Siegmund and Sieglinde; and, above all, Wotan's warrior daughter Brünnhilde. These characters and others follow their destinies to some of Wagner's most remarkable music.

## May 8 *Dialogues des Carmélites*

*World Premiere: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 1957.*

One of the most successful operas of the later decades of the 20th century, *Dialogues des Carmélites* is a rare case of a modern work that is equally esteemed by audiences and experts. The opera focuses on a young member of an order of Carmelite nuns, the aristocratic Blanche de la Force, who must overcome a pathological timidity in order to answer her life's calling. The score reflects key aspects of its composer's personality: Francis Poulenc was an urbane Parisian with a profound mystical dimension, and the opera addresses both the characters' internal lives and their external realities.



Music historian **Jeffrey Engel** will present each opera talk, offering historical context for the composer and the opera stories. In Paris for 14 years, Mr. Engel studied cello, art history and earned diplomas in French. As a cellist he played with orchestras in France, including the Paris Opera, performed in chamber ensembles and taught in municipal conservatories. A graduate of Ithaca College, & a teacher at Northwestern Connecticut Community College, Mr. Engel brings a rich knowledge of music history to each lecture, with musical excerpts.



## Prosser Public Library

1 Tunxis Avenue

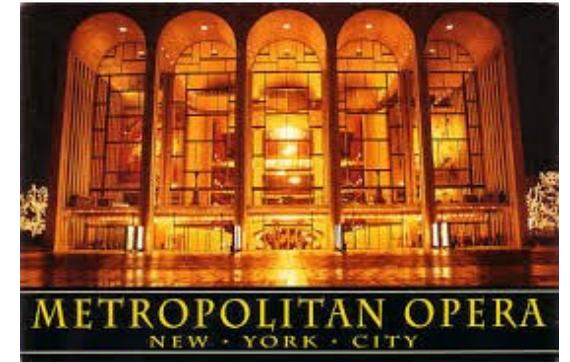
Bloomfield, CT 06002

860-243-9721

[www.prosserlibrary.info](http://www.prosserlibrary.info)



# OPERA TALKS 2018 - 2019



Prosser Public Library  
Bloomfield, CT

Jeffrey Engel  
Lecturer

Wednesdays  
1:00 PM

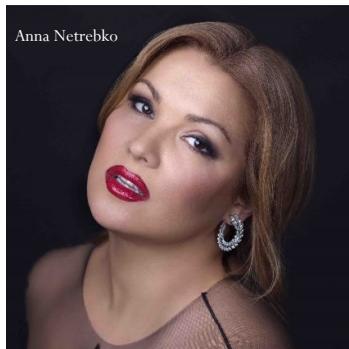
[www.prosserlibrary.info](http://www.prosserlibrary.info)

# METROPOLITAN OPERA

## October 3 *Aida*

Composer: Giuseppe Verdi

*World Premiere: Opera House, Cairo, 1871.* This grandest of grand operas features an epic backdrop for what is in essence an intimate love story. Set in ancient Egypt and packed with magnificent choruses, complex ensembles, and elaborate ballets, *Aida* never loses sight of its three protagonists. Few operas have matched *Aida* in its exploration of the conflict of private emotion and public duty, and perhaps no other has remained to the present day so unanimously appreciated by audiences and critics alike.



## October 17 *Samson et Dalila*

Composer: Camille Saint-Saëns

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) wrote several operas during his career, but *Samson et Dalila* (1877) has survived alone as his most popular. Darko Tresnjak, who won a Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical in 2014 for *A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder*, makes his Met debut directing a vivid, seductive staging, featuring a monumental setting for the last-act Temple of Dagon, where the hero crushes his Philistine enemies. This is the first new Met production of the work in 20 years.



## MONDAY October 22 *La Fanciulla del West*

Composer: Giacomo Puccini

*World Premiere: Metropolitan Opera, New York, 1910.* Puccini's "American" opera, based on David Belasco's play *The Girl of the Golden West*, had its glamorous and highly publicized world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera, with the composer in the audience. The drama is set during the California Gold Rush, and the girl of the title is one of Puccini's most appealing heroines - a strong, independent woman determined to win the man she loves. Although it fell out of favor with audiences for a few decades following its original success, *Fanciulla* has rebounded in popularity in recent years and is now counted among Puccini's best works.

## November 7 *Marnie*

Composer: Nico Muhly

Composer Nico Muhly unveils his second new opera for the Met with this gripping reimagining of Winston Graham's novel, set in the 1950s, about a beautiful, mysterious young woman who assumes multiple identities. Director Michael Mayer and his creative team have devised a fast-moving, cinematic world for this exhilarating story of denial and deceit, which also inspired a film by Alfred Hitchcock. Mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard sings the enigmatic *Marnie*, and baritone Christopher Maltman is the man who pursues her—with disastrous results. Robert Spano conducts. This work was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera.



## December 12 *La Traviata*

Composer: Giuseppe Verdi

*World premiere: Venice, Teatro la Fenice, 1853.* 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.



# 2019

## January 9 *Adriana Lecouvreur*

Composer: Francesco Cilea

*World Premiere: Teatro Lirico, Milan, 1902.* *Adriana Lecouvreur* occupies a unique place in the repertory: largely dismissed by experts from its premiere to the present day yet cherished by its fans for the dramatic possibilities provided by the lead roles. The opera is a deft combination of frank emotionalism and flowing lyricism, with pseudo-historical spectacle. Based on a play by Eugène Scribe, the story was inspired by the real-life intrigues of famed actress Adrienne Lecouvreur and the legendary soldier - and lover—Maurice of Saxony. Cilea's operatic retelling quickly became a favorite of charismatic soloists. The title character in particular is a quintessential diva role.



Lectures are at 1:00 PM on Wednesdays with one exception, Monday October 22.