

February 26 *Agrippina*

Composer: George Frederic Handel

Handel's tale of intrigue and impropriety in ancient Rome receives its first Met performances, with star mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as the controlling, power-hungry Agrippina and Harry Bicket conducting. Sir David McVicar's production ingeniously reframes the action of this black comedy about the abuse of power to "the present," where it should loudly resonate. The all-star cast features mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey as Agrippina's son and future emperor Nerone, soprano Brenda Rae as the seductive Poppea, countertenor Iestyn Davies as the ambitious officer Ottone, and bass Matthew Rose as the weary emperor Claudius.

March 11

Der Fliegende Holländer

Composer: Richard Wagner

Der Fliegende Holländer is the earliest of Wagner's operatic creations to remain in the repertory. The two lead roles represent archetypes to which the composer would return, in one form or another, in most of his later works: the "otherworldly stranger" and the woman who sacrifices herself for his salvation. The work's unearthly ambience is impressive but only one aspect of it: Both the world of nature and of the supernatural are magnificently evoked in the score.



April 8 *Tosca*

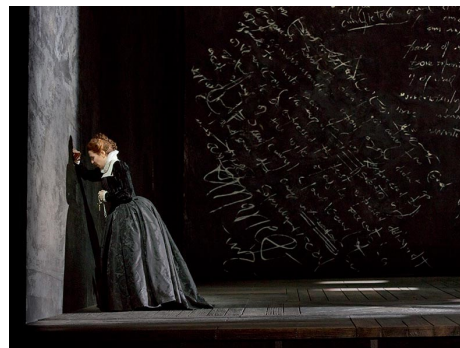
Composer: Giacomo Puccini

Puccini's melodrama about a volatile diva, a sadistic police chief, and an idealistic artist has offended and thrilled audiences for more than a century. Critics, for their part, have often had problems with *Tosca's* rather grungy subject matter, the directness and intensity of its score, and the crowd-pleasing dramatic opportunities it provides for its lead roles. But these same aspects have made *Tosca* one of a handful of iconic works that seem to represent opera in the public imagination. *Tosca's* popularity is further secured by a superb and exhilarating dramatic sweep, a driving score of abundant melody and theatrical shrewdness, and a career-defining title role.

May 6 *Maria Stuarda*

Composer: Gaetano Donizetti

A searingly dramatic setting of Friedrich Schiller's play about Mary, Queen of Scots, and her political and personal rivalry with Queen Elizabeth I of England, *Maria Stuarda* had a troubled genesis, despite its musical and theatrical brilliance, and only recently achieved a place in the repertory. These two fearsome rivals embody different perceptions of royalty, which were very much in direct conflict at that moment in time, and the opera's drama is true to history in a way the facts are not.



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.



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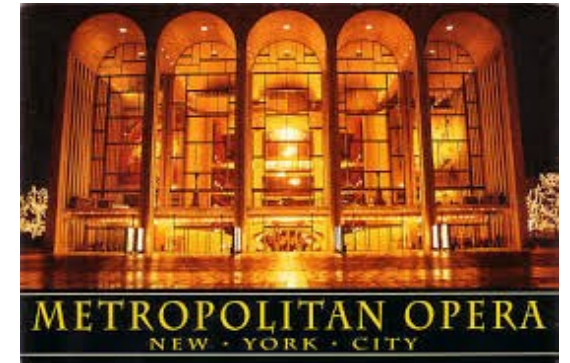
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OPERA TALKS 2019 - 2020



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Jeffrey Engel
Lecturer

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THURSDAY October 10

Turandot

Composer: Giacomo Puccini

Several opera composers saved their best or near best for last. It is certainly true for Mozart *Die Zauberflöte*, Rossini *Guillaume Tell*, Verdi *Falstaff* and Wagner *Parsifal*. The same can be said for Puccini's *Turandot*.

Many critics consider it his greatest work. It is marked by pageantry, adventurous harmonies, rich orchestral sound, one of the most demanding roles for dramatic soprano and a beloved aria that has been sung by every tenor (and at least once by a group of three) from Pavarotti to Bocelli. Set in ancient China, it is a director's dream for an opportunity to run riot in the costume and sets department.

Jeffrey Engel will relate the creative process behind *Turandot* and play excerpts from its score.



MONDAY October 21

Manon

Composer: Jules Massenet

A take on the quintessentially French tale of the beautiful young woman who is incapable of forsaking both love and luxury, Massenet's *Manon* features one of the truly unforgettable, irresistible, and archetypal female characters in opera. While the story is firmly set in class and gender issues of the past, the character of Manon herself is timeless, convincing, and familiar. The opera has been a success ever since its premiere, championed by a diverse roster of singers who have cherished its dramatic opportunities, exalted style, and ravishing music.

November 6

Madama Butterfly

Composer: Giacomo Puccini

A young Japanese geisha who clings to the belief that her arrangement with a visiting American naval officer is a loving and permanent marriage—is one of the defining roles in opera. The story triggers ideas about cultural and sexual imperialism for people far removed from the opera house, and film, Broadway, and popular culture in general have riffed endlessly on it. The lyric beauty of Puccini's score, especially the music for the thoroughly believable lead role, has made Butterfly timeless.

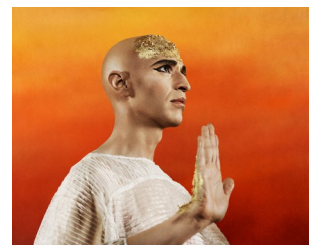


November 20 *Akhnaton*

Composer: Philip Glass

Director Phelim McDermott tackles another one of Philip Glass's masterpieces, following the now-legendary Met staging of *Satyagraha*. Star countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo is the title pharaoh, the revolutionary ruler who transformed ancient Egypt, with the striking mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges in her Met debut as his wife, Nefertiti. To match the opera's hypnotic, ritualistic music, McDermott has created an arresting vision that includes a virtuosic company of acrobats and jugglers. Karen Kamensek conducts in her Met debut.

This production was originally created by English National Opera and LA Opera.



2020

January 8 *Wozzeck*

Composer: Alban Berg

One of the emblematic achievements of the thriving artistic forces in Germany and Austria during the brief period between world wars, *Wozzeck* was a sensation and a scandal at its premiere. Remarkably, it has lost none of its power to fascinate, shock, and engage audiences, and its status as one of the defining musical works of the 20th century has not blunted its vitality.

January 29 *Porgy and Bess*

Composer: The Gershwins

Porgy returns to the Met for the first time in nearly 30 years. James Robinson's stylish production transports audiences to Catfish Row on the Charleston waterfront, vibrant with the music, dancing, emotion, and heartbreak of its inhabitants. "If you're going to stage Gershwin's opera, this is how," raved the Guardian when the new production premiered in London in 2018. David Robertson conducts a dynamic cast, featuring the sympathetic duo of Eric Owens and Angel Blue in the title roles and an all-star ensemble that includes Golda Schultz, Latonia Moore, Denyce Graves, Frederick Ballentine, Alfred Walker, and Ryan Speedo Green.



Please NOTE:

Lectures are at 1:00 PM on Wednesdays with two exceptions, THURSDAY October 10 and MONDAY October 21.