Richard Strauss

Salome

CONDUCTOR
Patrick Summers

PRODUCTION
Jürgen Flimm

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER
Santo Loquasto

LIGHTING DESIGNER
James F. Ingalls

CHOREOGRAPHER
Doug Varone

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR
James Levine

Opera in one act

Based on Hedwig Lachmann's translation of Oscar Wilde's drama, adapted by the composer

Saturday, October 11, 2008, 1:00–2:40pm

This production of *Salome* was made possible by a generous gift from the Gramma Fisher Foundation, Marshalltown, Iowa.

Additional funding for this production was received from Mr. and Mrs. Sid R. Bass, Agnes Varis and Karl Leichtman, Mr. and Mrs. Ezra K. Zilkha, and The Gilbert S. Kahn and John J. Noffo Kahn Endowment Fund.

The Metropolitan Opera

2008–09 Season

The 156th Metropolitan Opera performance of

Richard Strauss's

Salome

Conductor
Patrick Summers

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Narraboth
Joseph Kaiser

The page
Lucy Schaufer

First soldier
Keith Miller

Second soldier
Richard Bernstein

Jochanaan
Juha Uusitalo

A Cappadocian
David Won

Salome
Karita Mattila

A slave
Reveka Evangelia Mavrovitis

Herod
Kim Begley

Herodias
Ildikó Komlósi

First Jew
Allan Glassman

Second Jew
Mark Schowalter

Third Jew
Adam Klein

Fourth Jew
John Easterlin

Fifth Jew
James Courtney

First Nazarene
Morris Robinson

Second Nazarene
Donovan Singletary

Executioner
Reginald Braithwaite

Karita Mattila's performance is underwritten by the **Annenberg Principal Artist Fund**.

Saturday, October 11, 2008, 1:00–2:40pm

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Karita Mattila in the title role of Richard Strauss's *Salome*

Musical Preparation **Donna Racik**, **Paul Nadler**, **Robert Morrison**, **Dan Saunders**, and **Lydia Brown**
Assistant Stage Directors **Gregory Keller**, **Kristine McIntyre**, and **Stephen Pickover**
German Coach **Irene Spiegelman**
Prompter **Donna Racik**
Met Titles **Christopher Bergen**
Associate Set Designer **David Swayze**
Associate Costume Designer **Mitchell Bloom**
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Costumes executed by **Metropolitan Opera Costume Department** and **Werner Russold, Toronto**
Wigs executed by **Metropolitan Opera Wig Department**

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Met Titles

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Synopsis

At King Herod's palace, the young captain Narraboth admires the beautiful princess Salome, who sits at the banquet table with her stepfather, Herod, and his court ("Wie schön ist die Prinzessin Salome heute Nacht!"). A page warns Narraboth that something terrible might happen if he continues to stare at the princess, but Narraboth won't listen. The voice of Jochanaan is heard from the cistern, where he is kept prisoner, proclaiming the coming of the Messiah ("Nach mir wird einer kommen"), and two soldiers comment on the prophet's kindness and Herod's fear of him.

Suddenly Salome appears, disgusted with Herod's advances toward her and bored by his guests. Jochanaan's voice is heard again, cursing the sinful life of Salome's mother, Herodias. Salome asks about the prophet. The soldiers refuse to allow her to speak with him, but Narraboth, unable to resist her, orders that Jochanaan be brought forth from the cistern. At first terrified by the sight of the holy man, Salome quickly becomes fascinated by his appearance, begging him to let her touch his hair, skin, and lips. Jochanaan forcefully rejects her. Narraboth, who can't bear Salome's desire for another man, stabs himself. Salome, not noticing him and beside herself with excitement, continues to beg for Jochanaan's kiss. The prophet tells her to save herself by seeking Christ and retreats into the cistern, cursing Salome.

Herod appears from the palace, looking for the princess and commenting on the strange look of the moon. When he slips in Narraboth's blood, he suddenly panics and has hallucinations. Herodias angrily dismisses his fantasies and asks him to go back inside with her, but Herod's attentions are now focused on Salome. He offers her food and wine, but she rejects his advances. From the cistern, Jochanaan resumes his tirades against Herodias, who demands that Herod turn the prophet over to the Jews. Herod refuses, maintaining that Jochanaan is a holy man and has seen God. His words spark an argument among the Jews concerning the true nature of God, and two Nazarenes talk about the miracles of Jesus. As Jochanaan continues to accuse her, Herodias demands that he be silenced.

Herod asks Salome to dance for him ("Tanz für mich, Salome!"). She refuses, but when he promises to give her anything she wants, she agrees once she has made him swear to keep his word. Ignoring her mother's pleas not to, Salome dances seductively, removing her clothes (Dance of the Seven Veils). The delighted king wants to know what reward she would like, and she innocently asks for the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter. Horrified, the king refuses, while Herodias laughs approvingly at Salome's choice. Herod offers other rewards, but Salome insists and reminds Herod of his oath. The king finally gives in. As the executioner descends into the cistern, the princess anxiously and impatiently awaits her prize ("Es ist kein Laut zu vernehmen"). When the prophet's head is brought to her, she passionately addresses Jochanaan as if he were still alive and finally kisses his lips ("Ah! Ich habe deinen Mund geküsst"). The terrified Herod, outraged and disgusted at Salome's behavior, orders the soldiers to kill her.

Richard Strauss

Salome

Premiere: Dresden Court Opera, 1905

Richard Strauss was catapulted to international fame and notoriety with this incendiary and powerful opera. The story is derived from a brief, stark account in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew: a young princess of Judea dances for her stepfather Herod and chooses as her reward the head of the prophet John the Baptist. This subject captured the imaginations of many visual artists, from Botticelli (1488) to Gustave Doré (1865), but the full possibilities of the tale were perhaps best realized in Oscar Wilde's tragedy (1891). Originally conceived as a star vehicle for the great actress Sarah Bernhardt, Wilde's play boldly merged the story's latent themes of erotica, dementia, necrophilia, and religious inspiration. It was banned from public performance in several countries. To realize Wilde's vision as an opera, Strauss created a vast orchestral canvas built around a title role of gargantuan vocal, dramatic, and physical demands. That said, Strauss's score is honed into a single musical and dramatic sweep of less than an hour and a half. The result is a work with the grandeur of Wagner's epics told with the focus and emotional punch of the short Italian verismo operas. *Salome*'s first audiences were not only appalled by the depraved story unfolding on the stage but also by the harsh sounds of the orchestra (which are matched by moments of intense beauty). *Salome* is a rare instance of a *succès de scandale* that retains all the vitality of its initial appearance.

The Creators

Munich-born Richard Strauss (1864–1949), whose works form one of the pillars of the opera repertory, had mainly composed songs and an impressive body of orchestral works before he tried his hand at writing for the stage. After two early failures, *Salome* (1905) caused a theatrical sensation, and the balance of his long career was largely dedicated to opera, with *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Elektra*, and *Ariadne auf Naxos* among the high points of his output. Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), the Irish novelist, poet, and playwright, was one of the defining characters of the Victorian era. Strauss used a German translation of Wilde's play by Hedwig Lachmann (1865–1918), an author and poet who also translated works by Edgar Allan Poe, Honoré de Balzac, and Rabindranath Tagore.

The Setting

The action takes place outside the palace of King Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, in the early first century AD. The present production places the scene in a non-specific modern setting.

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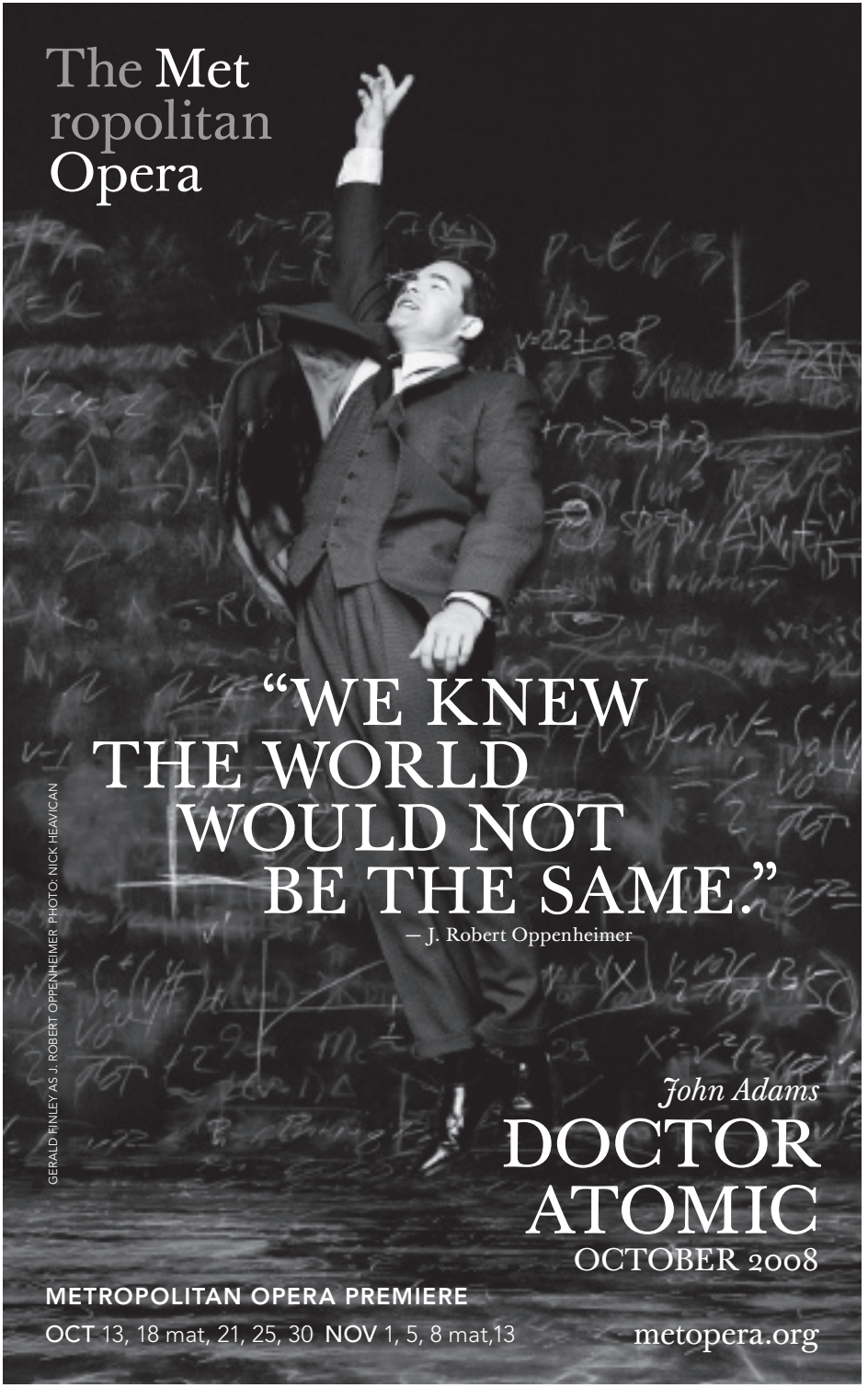

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BE THE SAME."

— J. Robert Oppenheimer

GERALD FINLEY AS J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER PHOTO: NICK HEAVICAN

John Adams

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The Music

From the opening measure, featuring two clarinets slithering up the scale, the score announces itself as exotic, iconoclastic, and thoroughly compelling. Much of the work's magic comes from the orchestra pit: Strauss indicated an orchestra of 105, including an organ, castanets, xylophone, harmonium, and heckelphon (a lower-ranged member of the oboe family that was invented the year before *Salome* premiered). The famous "Dance of the Seven Veils" occurs about two-thirds through the opera and is also frequently performed as a set piece in concerts. Many of the orchestra's other notable passages are more integrated into the surrounding score than the dance, though no less memorable. The first appearance of Jochanaan (as John the Baptist is known in the opera) from his cistern dungeon is an orchestral sunburst—we hear him breathing a moment of freedom and with renewed life. The moment when Salome waits for his beheading sounds supremely creepy: four double basses pinch a note between thumb and forefinger while hitting the string with their bows. Yet for all the wonder in the orchestra, the opera is uniquely demanding on the singers: the leaps and bounds of Herod's vocal line convey mental derangement. Jochanaan's brief appearances convince us of his ability to inspire both erotic and religious passion. But it is the title role that makes or breaks this opera: her lines stretch from the highest to the lowest ranges of the female voice, working with and sometimes against the huge orchestra. In its musical and dramatic challenges, it stands as one of the most demanding roles in opera.

Salome *at the Met*

The Met premiere of *Salome* in 1907, presented at the end of the evening after a long concert of operatic highlights, was a historic occasion for several reasons. The great Wagnerian diva Olive Fremstad took the title role, and the glittering audience included Giacomo Puccini (who remained fascinated, if baffled, by the work throughout his life). Many of those present recognized the revolutionary grandeur of the music, but the opera itself was deemed so morally and musically outrageous by critics and key Met board members that it was withdrawn after that single performance. *Salome* returned to the repertory in 1934 and was performed several times throughout the next decade. The opera was a sensation in 1949 with the Bulgarian soprano Ljuba Welitsch in the title role. Through the end of the 1950s it was standard to perform *Salome* as part of a double bill, with the most frequent (if unlikely) partner piece being Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. After Welitsch, notable interpreters of the title role at the Met have included Inge Borkh (1958), Birgit Nilsson (1965–66), Leonie Rysanek (1972–77), Grace Bumbry (1973–81), Hildegard Behrens (1990), and Catherine Malfitano (1996). Among the remarkable conductors to have led performances have been Dimitri Mitropoulos, Karl Böhm, Erich Leinsdorf, and James Levine.

Program Note

From Botticelli in the 15th century and Dürer in the 16th to Picasso and Klimt in the 20th, painters have been fascinated by the personality of Salome. But before Richard Strauss came along in the early years of the 20th century, only Alessandro Stradella with his *San Giovanni Battista* (1675) and Jules Massenet with his *Hérodiade* (1881) had dealt on a large musical scale with the biblical story of the young princess whose dancing so pleased her stepfather, Herod Antipas, that he promised her any reward she might care to name. Prompted by her mother, Herodias, she asked for the head of the itinerant evangelist John the Baptist. He had been imprisoned by Herod for his blasphemous claim to be preparing the way for God's appearance on earth, and for his denunciation of Herodias's marriage to Herod as "incestuous" (because her first husband, Salome's father, was Herod's half-brother). Herod, though reluctant to grant his stepdaughter's bloodthirsty request, kept his promise. The executioner, St. Mark records, "brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."

This is as far as the biblical narrative (which never names Salome) takes us. Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé*, written in French in 1891–92 as a vehicle for Sarah Bernhardt and published with the celebrated illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley, improved on the legend by introducing the motif of sexual obsession—Salome's for John and Herod's for her—and by inventing Herod's order that Salome should be killed by his soldiers, rather as one might put down a mad dog. Wilde's interest reflected that of several 19th-century writers, who found in the subject elements of religio-eroticism more in tune with the spirit of the time than the usual biblical themes. In addition, Wilde had a detailed knowledge of paintings of Salome. Only those by Gustave Moreau fully satisfied him. "Her lust must needs be infinite, and her perversity without limits," was Wilde's view. "Her pearls must expire on her flesh."

Wilde's play, banned in England, was first staged in 1896 in Paris, while its author was in jail. The first German production took place in Breslau in 1901, in a translation by one "Dr. Kisper." Another German translation, by Hedwig Lachmann, was sent to Richard Strauss by the young Viennese writer Anton Lindner, who offered to convert it into an opera libretto. Strauss asked for some sample scenes but was not impressed by them. He had already detected operatic possibilities in Lachmann's text as it stood. The opening line, "Wie schön ist die Prinzessin Salome heute Nacht!" ("How beautiful the Princess Salome is tonight"), immediately suggested music to him. His copy of the translation contains musical ideas jotted down hastily alongside crucial lines. When he eventually saw the play on the stage in Berlin (where he was conductor of the Court Opera) in November of 1902, in Max Reinhardt's production of Lachmann's translation, he had already made a number of sketches for an opera. Salome was played by the great actress Gertrud Eysoldt, whose striking performance was immortalized in Lovis Corinth's well-known painting.

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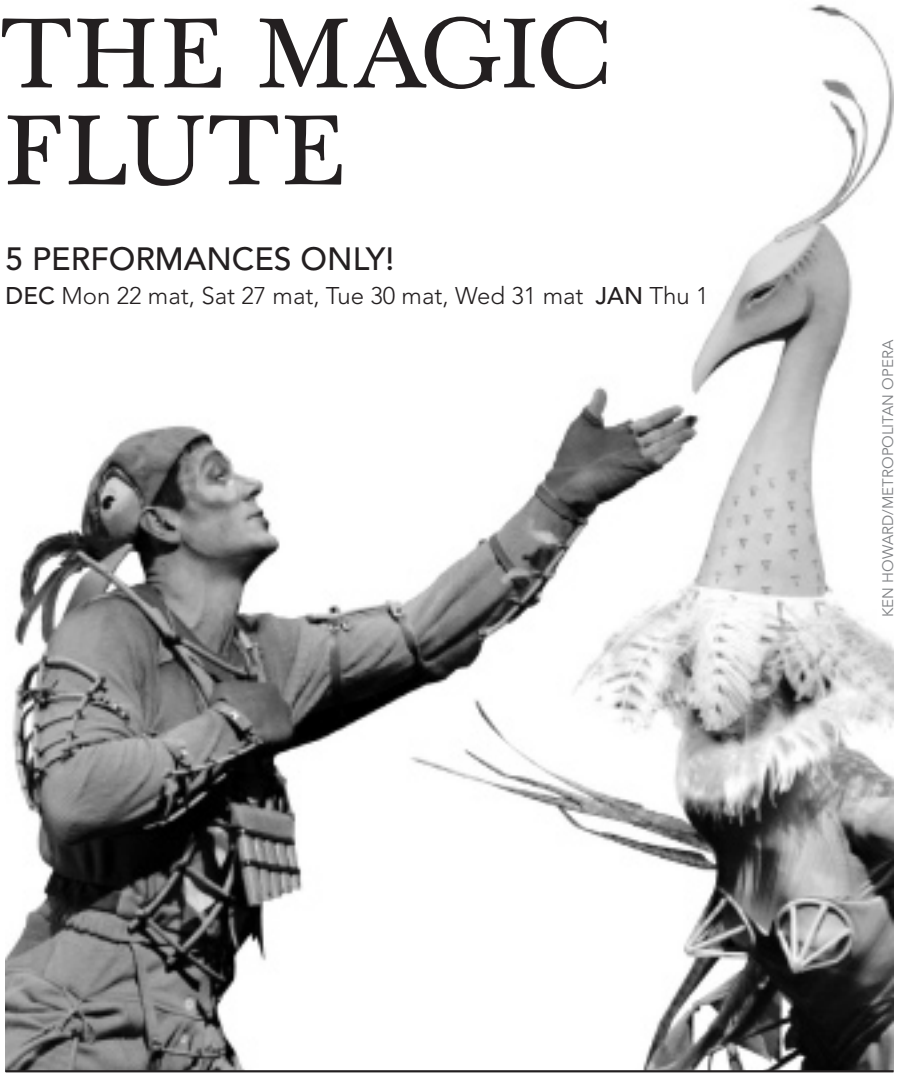

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Strauss shortened the Wilde–Lachmann text by about one third, eliminating some subsidiary episodes and reducing the floridity of the imagery. He also significantly shifted the balance of the play. Wilde's central character was Herod. Strauss's, indisputably, is Salome—"a 16-year-old princess with the voice of Isolde," he called her. He completed the musical sketch during his 1904 summer holiday and finished the full score on June 20, 1905. The last part to be written was the Dance of the Seven Veils, often decried as the weakest feature of the opera, but more justly defined as a brilliantly effective, self-contained tone-poem, its music wheedling, kittenish, teasing, and ultimately demoniacal, as Strauss lashes the waltz rhythm into a frenzy.

Strauss awarded the first performance to Dresden, where the conductor Ernst von Schuch had earned Strauss's gratitude for the successful launching of his satirical opera *Feuersnot* in 1901. The composer warned Schuch that the singers of the three principal roles of Salome, Herod, and Jochanaan (the Hebrew name for John the Baptist) would need three months to learn their parts. He had misgivings about the casting of Dresden's buxom Wagnerian soprano Marie Wittich as the slim, youthful Salome, but decided that the vocal demands of the role overrode the visual. At the first piano rehearsal, all except one of the singers returned their parts in protest to the conductor. The exception was Czech tenor Carl Burrian (Herod), who already knew his by heart. This shamed his colleagues into reluctant action. Later, when Wittich realized the full extent of the "perversities" the director had devised for her, she threatened to go on strike, protesting, "I won't do it, I'm a decent woman." As a result, Strauss informed Schuch that he would reserve the first performance for him only until December 9. After that, Arthur Nikisch in Leipzig or Gustav Mahler in Vienna could have it. The premiere was given on the deadline-date and was an overwhelming success: the audience demanded 38 curtain calls. But the critics abused it as immoral and cacophonous.

The so-called "immorality" of *Salome* led to censorship problems in several countries. Strauss was bluffing Schuch because, although Mahler was anxious to conduct the opera in Vienna, his intention had provoked a warning shot from the Court Opera House censor as early as September of 1905. But Mahler persevered resolutely; after reading the score he wrote to Strauss: "Every note is right!… I shall leave no stone unturned and shall never flag in championing this incomparable, thoroughly original masterpiece." Mahler first saw *Salome* in Berlin in 1907, when he attended two performances within a few days. "One of the greatest masterpieces of our time," he wrote to his wife. "It is the voice of the 'earth-spirit' speaking from the heart of genius." This was Mahler's way of saying that he recognized that the opera's subject was sex. But the censors denied him the chance to conduct it (its first Vienna performance, by a visiting company from Breslau, was given in 1907 at a theater not under the court censor's control). At one point Mahler hinted to Strauss that he might threaten

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Monday, October 13
8:00PM
J. Adams: *Doctor Atomic*
NEW PRODUCTION PREMIERE

Tuesday, October 14
8:00PM
Mozart: *Don Giovanni*

Wednesday, October 15
8:00PM
Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor*

Thursday, October 16
8:00PM
R. Strauss: *Salome*

Monday, October 20
8:00PM
Verdi: *La Traviata*

Tuesday, October 21
8:00PM
J. Adams: *Doctor Atomic*

Wednesday, October 22
8:00PM
Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor*

Friday, October 24
8:00PM
Puccini: *Madama Butterfly*

Monday, October 27
8:00PM
Verdi: *La Traviata*

Wednesday, October 29
8:00PM
Puccini: *Madama Butterfly*

Thursday, October 30
8:00PM
J. Adams: *Doctor Atomic*

Friday, October 31
8:00PM
Verdi: *La Traviata*

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to resign his directorship of the Court Opera over *Salome*, which brought the noble response: "We need an artist of your determination, your genius and your outlook in such a position too badly for you to put anything at stake on *Salome*'s account. In the end we shall attain our ends without this!" *Salome* was not performed at the Vienna State Opera until 1918.

Strauss's employer in Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm II, remarked that *Salome* would do its composer harm. Strauss's famous retort—that the "harm" enabled him to build his villa in Garmisch—betrays how successful the opera was—both as a coruscating and sensational score and as a *succès de scandale*. Even today, when our sensitivities have been blunted by far worse horrors than the desire of a depraved girl to kiss the mouth of a decapitated prophet, *Salome* has the power to shock and sicken an audience, not only because of its uncanny translation into music of Wilde's *fin de siècle* decadence, but through the graphic and atmospheric magnetism of Strauss's marvelous score. It gives the impression of having been composed in one sustained burst of invention, although structurally it is divided into the sections of a symphonic poem.

Dramatically, the opera is superbly paced, rising to the climax of Salome's final solo, in which all the melodic themes and fragments are drawn together in an orgasmic expression of mounting desire and madness. It is easy to believe that, as has been suggested, this scene was composed first and that the rest of the one-act opera grew from it. Yet it is not Salome's opera alone. The music for Herod and Herodias and (whatever Strauss's own misgivings about its quality) for Jochanaan is almost as starkly characterized, while over the whole score, like the moonlight in which the action takes place, a nocturnal luminosity is shed by the masterful orchestration.

The orchestra is, in a real sense, the protagonist in *Salome*. Although over 100 instruments are required, Strauss only occasionally unleashes their full capacity. Much of the score is light, transparent, and subtly colored. His advice that it should be played "like fairy music by Mendelssohn" is a valuable hint to interpreters. The virtuosity of the scoring of this "scherzo with a fatal conclusion," in Strauss's own words, is dazzling, from the clarinet's opening roulade to the grinding final chords that underline the horror of Salome's violent death. Borrowed from Berlioz, the famous passage for "pinched" high double-bass notes as Salome sighs with anguish while waiting for Jochanaan's head is but one of numerous *loci classici* of Strauss's ability to create sounds that exactly mirror the dramatic situation. It is the orchestra, like a stream of consciousness, that tells us what is in the characters' minds and hearts even before they know it themselves. Just one example: when Salome's sexual obsession for Jochanaan becomes murderous, the orchestra converts (by distortion) the theme of her longing to kiss his mouth into that of her demand for his head on a silver charger.

—Michael Kennedy

Patrick Summers
CONDUCTOR (WASHINGTON, INDIANA)

THIS SEASON *Salome, Madama Butterfly*, the National Council Grand Finals Concert, and the Opening Night Gala at the Met; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Rigoletto*, *Chorus!* (encompassing scenes from great choral operas, conceived and staged by David Pountney), and the world premiere of Previn's *Brief Encounter* with Houston Grand Opera; Heggie's *Three Decembers* with San Francisco Opera; and the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *The Letter* with Santa Fe Opera.

MET APPEARANCES *I Puritani*, *Die Fledermaus* (debut, 1998), *Così fan tutte*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Rodelinda*, and *La Traviata*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Currently music director of the Houston Grand Opera, where he has conducted more than 30 productions, including the world premieres of Heggie's *The End of the Affair*, Machover's *Resurrection*, Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree*, and Portman's *The Little Prince*. Has also conducted Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* at San Francisco Opera and at Strasbourg's Opéra National du Rhin and Floyd's *Of Mice and Men* with the Vienna Symphony at the Bregenz Festival. Formerly principal guest conductor of the San Francisco Opera, he has conducted numerous performances there, including Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and the world premiere of Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.

Ildikó Komlósi
MEZZO-SOPRANO (BEKESSZENTANDRAS, HUNGARY)

THIS SEASON Herodias in *Salome* and Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Met.

MET APPEARANCES Charlotte in *Werther* (debut, 1999) and Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Santuzza in Turin and with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* in Genoa, Laura in *La Gioconda* at the Arena di Verona, the title role of *Carmen* in Tokyo and at Dresden's Semperoper, Judith in *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Lucerne Festival, Amneris in *Aida* at La Scala and Covent Garden, the Princess in *Adriana Lecouvreur* at La Scala, the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Eboli in *Don Carlo* in Naples, and Jocasta in Enescu's *Oedipus Rex* at Cagliari's Teatro Lirico. She has also been heard in the United States with the San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, and Cleveland Opera.

Karita Mattila
SOPRANO (SOMERO, FINLAND)

THIS SEASON Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin* and Salome at the Met, Káťa Kabanová in Madrid, Leonore in *Fidelio* in Barcelona, and concert appearances with the Munich Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and Washington National Symphony Orchestra.

MET APPEARANCES Manon Lescaut, Jenůfa, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* (debut, 1990), Káťa Kabanová, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Musetta in *La Bohème*, Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*, Leonore, and Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Has performed at all the world's major opera houses and festivals in repertoire that encompasses Beethoven, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, and Janáček. Notable engagements include Jenůfa in Los Angeles; the world premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Mirage* with the Orchestre de Paris; Manon Lescaut with the San Francisco Opera; Leonore at Covent Garden; Tosca with the Finnish National Opera; Elisabeth in *Don Carlo* in Paris, London, and at the Edinburgh Festival; Chrysothemis in *Elektra* with the Salzburg Easter Festival; and Lisa, Elsa, and Salome with Paris's Bastille Opera.

Kim Begley
TENOR (BIRKENHEAD, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON Herod in *Salome* and Loge in *Das Rheingold* at the Met, Herod with the Geneva Opera, and Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* at Florence's Maggio Musicale.

MET APPEARANCES Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace*, Laca in *Jenůfa* (debut, 2003), and Samuel Griffiths in the world premiere of Picker's *An American Tragedy*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Laca at Los Angeles Opera, the title role of Janáček's *The Adventures of Mr. Brouček* in Geneva, and the Jailor in Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero* at La Scala. He has also sung Loge at the Bayreuth Festival, Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* in Frankfurt, Florestan in *Fidelio* and Herod with Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Captain Vere with San Francisco Opera. Additional engagements include performances at Covent Garden and Paris's Châtelet and Bastille operas.

Joseph Kaiser
TENOR (MONTREAL, CANADA)

THIS SEASON Narraboth in *Salome* at the Met, Septimius in Handel's *Theodora* at the Salzburg Festival, and debuts with Los Angeles Opera as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* and Munich's Bavarian State Opera as Števa in *Jenůfa*.

MET APPEARANCES Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* (debut, 2007) and Tamino.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent debuts include Narraboth at Covent Garden and Jonas in Saariaho's *Adriana Mater* at Santa Fe Opera. He starred as Tamino in Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation of *The Magic Flute* and has sung Lenski in *Eugene Onegin* at the Salzburg Festival, Bénédict in Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* with Chicago Opera Theatre, and Roméo, Narraboth, the Chevalier de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* with Lyric Opera of Chicago. He appeared on Broadway as Schaunard in the Baz Luhrmann production of *La Bohème*.

Juha Uusitalo
BASS-BARITONE (VASSA, FINLAND)

THIS SEASON Jochanaan in *Salome* for his Met debut, Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* for his debut with Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Wanderer in *Siegfried* in Florence, Scarpia in *Tosca* and Jack Rance in *La Fanciulla del West* in Helsinki, Wotan in complete *Ring* cycles in Vienna and Valencia, and the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Falstaff, Amfortas in *Parsifal*, and Jochanaan with the Finnish National Opera; Amfortas, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio*, and Wotan with Munich's Bavarian State Opera; Don Pizarro at Paris's Châtelet and in San Francisco and Valencia; and his signature role of the Dutchman at La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, San Francisco Opera, Berlin State Opera, Savonlinna Opera Festival, Tokyo's New National Theatre, and in concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Family Affair

Thanks to the restoration efforts of two family businesses, the Met's legendary chandeliers shine brighter than ever this season.

Each summer, the Met's signature chandeliers are cleaned with a combination of Windex and elbow grease. But despite these efforts, the chandeliers, designed by the Austrian company J. & L. Lobmeyr and featuring Swarovski crystals, have over time lost some of their sheen. Enter Swarovski, which this summer made a generous donation to restore the 11 chandeliers in the front lobby, installing nearly 50,000 pieces of new crystal.

"It's clear that the chandeliers are beautifully cared for," says Nadja Swarovski, Vice-President of Swarovski and a direct descendant of the founder of the famous Austrian company. "But it's inevitable that there would be some damage, whether from dust or from electrics. For us it has been really great to see that we could add new modern elements to this beautiful existing design." The company's new machine-made crystals are a vast improvement over the old handmade ones, and Swarovski points out that the crystals have been de-ionized so that they attract less dust and therefore retain their brilliance.

Next year the enterprise will continue: Swarovski is funding the refurbishment of the 138 wall sconces in the opera house, including new electrical components and new Swarovski crystal that will match the brilliance of the restored chandeliers.

Johannes Rath, managing partner of J. & L. Lobmeyr, traveled to New York to oversee the removal of the 11 chandeliers and transport them back to Lobmeyr in Vienna for the restoration work. His grandfather, Hans Harald Rath, was the original designer and manufacturer of the chandeliers and fixtures in the opera house. On Opening Night in 1966, when the new Met opened and the chandeliers made their debut, he was in the audience when the auditorium chandeliers rose to the ceiling for the first time, causing a spontaneous burst of applause from a surprised audience. On Opening Night of the 2008–09 season, in a nod to family tradition, Johannes will be sitting in the very same seat in the Grand Tier that his grandfather occupied 42 years ago. —*Charles Sheek*

Jonathan Tichler

Ken Howard

Martin Stoebich

Outfitted with nearly 50,000 new pieces of crystal, the Met chandeliers were re-installed in time for Opening Night.