

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

AGRIPPINA

CONDUCTOR
Harry Bicket

PRODUCTION
Sir David McVicar

SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER
John Macfarlane

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Paule Constable

CHOREOGRAPHER
Andrew George

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

JEANETTE LERMAN-NEUBAUER
MUSIC DIRECTOR
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Vincenzo Grimani

Saturday, February 29, 2020
1:00–4:45PM

New Production

The production of *Agrippina* was made possible
by a generous gift of **Dunard Fund USA**

This production was originally created by the
Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie / De Munt Brussels
and adapted by the Metropolitan Opera

**Today's performance and *Live in HD* transmission
are dedicated to the memory of Mirella Freni.**

The Metropolitan Opera

2019-20 SEASON

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The seventh Metropolitan Opera performance of
GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL’S

AGRIPPINA

CONDUCTOR
Harry Bicket

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

AGRIPPINA, EMPRESS OF ROME
Joyce DiDonato

POPPEA (POPPAEA),
A ROMAN LADY
Brenda Rae

NERONE (NERO),
AGRIPPINA’S SON FROM
A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE
Kate Lindsey*

CLAUDIO (CLAUDIUS),
EMPEROR OF ROME
Matthew Rose

PALLANTE (PALLAS),
A GENERAL
Duncan Rock

CONTINUO
HARPSICHORD Harry Bicket
CELLO David Heiss
THEORBO/ARCHLUTE/GUITAR
Daniel Swenberg
John Lenti

NARCISO (NARCISSUS),
A POLITICIAN
Nicholas Tamagna

LESBO (LESBUS), A SERVANT
OF EMPEROR CLAUDIO
Christian Zarembo

HARPSICHORD RIPIENO
AND ONSTAGE SOLO
Bradley Brookshire

OTTONE (OTHO), COMMANDER
OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY
Iestyn Davies

Saturday, February 29, 2020, 1:00–4:45PM

This afternoon's performance is being transmitted live
in high definition to movie theaters worldwide.

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Musical Preparation Gareth Morrell, Bradley Brookshire,
and Dimitri Dover*

Assistant Stage Directors Jonathon Loy, Rory Pelsue,
Marcus Shields, and J. Knighten Smit

Met Titles Christopher Bergen

Italian Coach Hemdi Kfir

Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and
painted by Metropolitan Opera Shops

Costumes executed by Metropolitan Opera Costume
Department

Wigs and Makeup executed by Metropolitan Opera
Wig and Makeup Department

Agrippina, HWV 6, is performed from the Hallische
Händel-Ausgabe version, edited by John E. Sawyer; used
by arrangement with European American Music Distributors
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usher at intermission.

Synopsis

Act I

The Roman Emperor Claudio is due to return to Rome in triumph after the conquest of Britain. His wife, the Empress Agrippina, has received secret information that his ship has capsized in a storm, and the emperor is presumed dead. Driven by ambition for her son from a former marriage, Nerone, she urges him to win popular favor and be seen doing good deeds around the city. She next recruits two of Claudio's freedmen, Pallante and Narciso, to her cause, promising sexual favors to each one in return. Nerone's charity work goes down well in the Forum with the people of Rome, and Pallante and Narciso acclaim him as the obvious successor to Claudio, should the day come. Agrippina arrives and breaks the shocking news of Claudio's death at sea. Pallante and Narciso immediately hail Nerone as the new Caesar, and Agrippina quickly agrees. At that moment, Claudio's servant Lesbo rushes in with the exciting news that the emperor has been saved from the waves by the Roman officer Ottone and has landed safely on the Italian shore. Feigning joy, Agrippina welcomes Ottone, but she and her son are dumbstruck when Ottone announces that Claudio has rewarded his valor by naming him as his successor. In private, Ottone confides to Agrippina that he loves the beautiful Poppea and asks her to intercede with her on his behalf. Agrippina knows that Claudio is also pursuing Poppea and sees a way to destroy Ottone. Lesbo visits Poppea and tells her, overheard by Agrippina, that the emperor has already entered the city in secret to spend the night with her rather than his wife. Poppea admits to herself that it is Ottone she longs for, but Agrippina arrives and tells her that Ottone has betrayed her, giving her up to Claudio in his ambition to gain the throne. She advises Poppea to take revenge by refusing Claudio's advances, accusing the jealous and possessive Ottone of standing in their way. Poppea does as she's told when she meets with Claudio, adding that Ottone's pride is making him behave as de-facto emperor already. Claudio promises to punish Ottone, but the approach of Agrippina interrupts his amorous pursuit of Poppea. The empress congratulates her protégée, but Poppea is torn by what she has set into motion.

Act II

Pallante and Narciso compare notes and discover that Agrippina has been playing them both. They decide to work together as events unfold. Ottone proudly anticipates the announcement of his succession to the throne as Claudio officially enters the city in triumph. But as the emperor is congratulated on his conquest, he suddenly and publicly turns on Ottone, declaring him a traitor. In turn, the others—including Agrippina and, to his astonishment, Poppea—walk away in disgust from Ottone, leaving him in uncomprehending despair.

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 2:40PM)

Act II (continued)

Poppea's uneasiness about her part in Ottone's downfall torments her. Ottone unexpectedly enters, and Poppea hides, pretending to be asleep when Ottone discovers her. She seemingly walks in her sleep, revealing Agrippina's plot and accusing Ottone of infidelity. Ottone defends himself, and Poppea realizes that Agrippina has deceived her. Abandoning pretense, she tells Ottone to visit her later and begins to plot revenge on Agrippina. Lesbo arrives to tell her that Claudio is impatient to arrange another rendezvous. Poppea sees an opportunity and agrees. When Nerone enters, she lures him into an assignation at her apartment that night. Agrippina, meanwhile, is full of fear that Pallante and Narciso will betray her to Claudio, that Poppea will see through her lies, and that Ottone might still present a threat. She manages to use her charms to persuade first Pallante then Narciso back to her cause, cajoling each of them to plot the murder of the other and of Ottone. Having taken care of three enemies, she turns to Claudio, but he proves harder to persuade when she urges him to nominate Nerone as his successor to block the threat of an insurrection led by Ottone. Lesbo suddenly enters to whisper to Claudio that Poppea is expecting him. Desperate to leave, he capitulates to his wife's nagging and agrees to name Nerone.

Act III

Ottone arrives at Poppea's apartment, and she hides him in a closet, telling him that he will witness her revenge so long as he controls himself and stays quiet. An amorous Nerone arrives, but Poppea hides him in another closet on the pretext that she is expecting a visit from his mother. When Claudio now enters, Poppea complains that he has mistakenly ruined the wrong man; it is Nerone, not Ottone, who is Claudio's jealous rival. Claudio is suspicious and incredulous, but Poppea reveals Nerone's hiding place. The emperor angrily dismisses his stepson. When Poppea begs him also to leave, pretending fear of Agrippina's revenge on behalf of her son, Claudio storms out. Poppea and Ottone are reconciled. Nerone tells his mother about Poppea's treachery, and Agrippina pours scorn on her son for his credulity. Meanwhile, Pallante and Narciso, desperate to save themselves, reveal Agrippina's plots to Claudio. The emperor confronts his wife with her misdeeds, but she manages to extricate herself with an elaborate and brilliant defense. She accuses Claudio in return of infidelity with Poppea. He insists that Nerone is actually Poppea's lover and orders guards to have the others brought before him. Claudio plays with everyone's love and ambition, throwing Poppea into Nerone's arms and nominating Ottone once more as his successor. Ottone refuses the throne to keep Poppea. Nerone would be happy with both. Ultimately, it is Poppea who decides things, declaring her love for Ottone. Claudio blesses the union of the lovers and cedes the throne to Nerone. Agrippina is triumphant. Claudio prays for the future contentment of Rome.

George Frideric Handel

Agrippina

Premiere: Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo, Venice, 1709

This early Italian opera by Handel was a success that secured the composer's international reputation. While he continued to develop artistically for the next 50 years, his full genius is perfectly evident in this first great operatic accomplishment. In *Agrippina*, Handel and his librettist—cardinal and diplomat Vincenzo Grimani—created a sophisticated political and social satire about merciless power struggles in ancient Rome. But despite its ancient setting, the opera, like any good satire, is not really about the past. Audiences at the premiere would have understood references to the emperor to be digs at the contemporary ruler of Rome, the pope, with whom Grimani sometimes grappled over matters of state. And unlike later opera-seria librettists who stressed virtues in idealized characters, Grimani preferred a wryly perceptive look at people as they really are. His characters are flawed but not absurdly evil, and struggle with the conflict between lofty ideals and their own base desires. Today, the issues at stake in *Agrippina*—the power plays, sexual politics, and cults of personality played out against a fickle public—continue to resonate.

The Creators

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) was born in Germany, trained extensively in the music capitals of Italy, and spent most of his brilliant career in London. While his great choral and orchestral works have remained extraordinarily popular up to the present day, his theatrical creations largely disappeared from the world's stages for almost two centuries. During the later decades of the 20th century, a widespread reassessment of his operas brought these works to the attention of contemporary audiences. Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani (1652 or 1655–1710) was a career diplomat who also supplied libretti for opera composers, the text for *Agrippina* being his most famous.

The Setting

Agrippina was originally set in Rome, late in the reign of the Emperor Claudius (d. 54 CE), a time of great struggles for the throne and all the power and splendor associated with imperial Roman power. Historical and legendary tales of the title character have long been a lurid source of scandalous reportage and speculation. Sir David McVicar's staging updates the action to the current day: an era in which sly posturing and questionable tactics continue to drive political discourse.

The Music

Handel's inventive musical style is the perfect vehicle for the complex ideas of this drama: Like imperial corruption itself, the score can dazzle with elegant splendor even while exposing the devious machinations under the surface. Although there are ensembles scattered throughout the score, the basic unit of this work is the A–B–A da-capo aria: There is a first section, a central bridge, and a restatement of the original section with some degree of variation and ornamentation. The musical miracle is in the diversity of expression that Handel achieves within this structure. He also uses specific voice types to express character. Agrippina's somewhat gullible husband, the bass Claudio, is musically more lumbering and dense, sometimes even comical, than the swift-witted women and flighty, high-voiced men around him. Handel wrote the remarkably virtuous Ottone for a female contralto (as opposed to a castrato), and the deep tone expresses earnestness well. Conversely, Agrippina's depraved son Nerone was originally a high castrato (now sung by a soprano), and this, as well as the rhythm of his aria (6/8, typically used for country dances and other rustic music), have faux-naïve and randy qualities. The manipulative lover Poppea, sung by a lyric soprano, has the frankly seductive lines of Act I's aria "Vaghe perle," when she adorns herself, as well as the more substantial (and genuinely tender) aria sung to her love Ottone, "Bel piacere è godere." As in all of the composer's operas, supreme vocal virtuosity is expected and required to express the drama, nowhere more on display than in Agrippina's climactic fury aria "Pensieri, voi mi tormentate."

Mirella Freni, 1935–2020

Today's performance, which is also being seen in cinemas around the world as part of the Met's *Live in HD* series, is dedicated to the memory of Mirella Freni, the remarkable Italian soprano who died earlier this month. Her extraordinarily beautiful voice and intense, Italianate interpretations captivated Met audiences from her 1965 debut to a gala celebrating her 40th year with the company in 2005. Freni's artistry was impeccable, and she was admired and beloved by her fellow artists and company members.



KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

Program Note

Premiered in Venice on December 26, 1709, *Agrippina* was the first great success of George Frideric Handel's career. In a city where opera had thrived since its earliest days roughly a hundred years earlier, where Claudio Monteverdi had flourished, and where dozens of new operas debuted every season, the enthusiasm it created was astonishing, especially for a very young composer who was not even Italian. The 24-year-old Saxon-born composer had arrived in the country three years earlier, and *Agrippina* was only the fourth opera he'd written. Not yet the portly, bewigged icon we see in old engravings, he was a handsome and ambitious young man with an uncanny ability to adapt rapidly to a variety of international cultures, as well as the prodigious musical gifts to capitalize on every opportunity he encountered.

Handel's first biographer, John Mainwaring, described the scene at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo the night of the premiere: "The theater at almost every pause resounded with shouts of 'Viva il caro Sassone!' ('Long live the beloved Saxon!'). They were thunderstruck with the grandeur and sublimity of his style." To meet the clamor for tickets, 27 performances were immediately scheduled. And because of the prestige of a Venetian success, Handel's fame rapidly spread to other European cities. In another year and a half, his *Rinaldo* would make him the toast of London.

Despite his youth, Handel had already traveled far—literally as well as artistically—to build his reputation. Born in the Upper Saxon city of Halle, he had moved to Hamburg, a city with a lively theatrical and musical life, before he turned 20. There, he wrote and premiered his first opera, *Almira*.

But despite the considerable operatic opportunities of Hamburg, Handel knew the place to become a master of his craft was Italy. Late in 1706, assisted by money from his father's estate, he moved on to Florence and Rome, where he made the most of his abilities as a phenomenally quick learner of both the Italian language and the Italian musical styles—especially as epitomized by Arcangelo Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti, who served as his artistic models. Equally important for his rapid rise was his talent for winning friends (both Scarlatti and his son Domenico among them) and making important connections with the aristocracy.

After a brief stay in Florence, Handel transferred to Rome, which provided plentiful opportunities for patronage along with a significant obstacle: ruled by the papal court, the city permitted no staged opera performances. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastical courts sponsored an impressive concert life of secular as well as sacred music, with particular emphasis on the vocal cantata, which in its parade of dramatic recitatives and da-capo arias differed little from the operas of the day. Writing approximately 100 cantatas in less than three years, Handel honed his skills setting the Italian language while developing a powerfully expressive vocal style. Indeed, one of his secular cantatas, *Agrippina Condotta a Morire* (*Agrippina Led to her Death*), previewed the opera to come, though it was tragic

rather than satirical in nature. (Historically, after she enabled Nero to secure the throne, Agrippina's continuing dominance over him enraged him, and he had her assassinated in 59 CE.) The scores of these cantatas would provide Handel with a rich quarry of thematic ideas for both operas and oratorios for the rest of his career.

The excellence of Handel's cantatas endeared him to many of Rome's cardinals, who were as wealthy and powerful as the secular aristocracy. A significant admirer was Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani, who would later become Viceroy of Naples. Grimani was a passionate opera lover and theatrical impresario, whose family owned the beautiful Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo in Venice. More skilled political operative than clergyman, he was a cunning diplomat for the Austrian side in the ongoing War of the Spanish Succession. And he was happy in his spare moments to turn his hand to writing opera libretti.

Based on the strength of Handel's cantatas, Grimani chose the young composer to set a libretto he'd devised to grace the stage of his family's theater. It was a satirical black comedy set in ancient Rome about five historical characters—the Emperor Claudius, his wife Agrippina, her son and emperor-to-be Nero, the Roman general Otho, and his lover, the courtesan Poppaea—as told in the *Annals* of Tacitus and Suetonius's *Life of Claudius*. Opera aficionados were already familiar with these figures, for all of them, with the exception of Agrippina, were protagonists in Monteverdi's great Venetian opera of 1643 *L'Incoronazione de Poppea*. More recently, the same characters schemed and betrayed in Robert Graves's savage novels *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*, which became a popular television series in the 1970s.

Grimani's libretto for *Agrippina* was an extraordinary gift for Handel and is regarded today as perhaps the finest libretto he ever set. Witty and ironic, it is, in Handel biographer Jonathan Keates's words, filled with "the atmosphere of conspiracy and intrigue with which [Grimani] himself was so familiar." Its characters, especially Agrippina herself, are vividly drawn, and despite their villainous plots, we are encouraged to sympathize with them. As musicologist Winton Dean says, "Grimani, whether deliberately or by happy accident, for the first time released Handel's extraordinary insight into the manifold subtleties of human nature."

The singers who would embody these characters at the opera's premiere were among the best in Northern Italy, beginning with soprano Margherita Durastanti as Agrippina. She was one of Handel's favorite singers—they were rumored to be lovers at the time—and he later brought her to London. Claudio was sung by Antonio Francesco Carli, a bass with an exceptional range and powerful low notes. Ottone was originally a female "trouser role," performed by contralto Francesca Vanini-Boschi. The brilliant young soprano Diamante Maria Scarabelli was Poppea.

Like the speed with which he later composed *Messiah*, Handel created the music for *Agrippina* in only three weeks. This pace was enabled by his habit of using pre-existing materials, both his own and that of other composers. This was not then considered plagiarism: It was standard practice in the Baroque era to borrow previously written music and revise it for new works. In the score of *Agrippina*, only five musical numbers were wholly new creations; everything else was recycled, largely from Handel's Italian cantatas, though often heavily reworked.

Agrippina is one of the oldest operas that the Met has ever presented. And yet in many ways, it is surprisingly modern. Keates aptly describes the plot as "a wickedly satirical comedy of sex, politics, and female ambition." The smarter and more ruthless women—Agrippina and Poppea—dominate, while the male characters—Claudio, Ottone, and Nerone—are frequently their helpless dupes. Always ready to convert any obstacle to her advantage, Agrippina is the most fully drawn and multi-faceted character. Poppea is a younger schemer-in-training, but by the end of the opera, she is able to outwit even Agrippina. "Handel never loads the dice," Dean writes. "He views all the characters dispassionately with a tolerant eye, observing, never judging."

The music follows the traditional Baroque formula of recitative and da-capo aria, the former used for moving the plot along, the latter for revealing the characters' emotional response. However, Handel was a master of creating a myriad of effects within the confines of the da-capo form. In Act I's cleverly calculated "Non hò cor che per amarti," for example, we see her exercising all her powers of persuasion and deceit to trick Poppea. The imperial dignity of the orchestral opening stresses her status, while slippery melismas in the voice and accompanying oboes urge Poppea to trust her. But in one of the opera's greatest arias, Act II's "Pensieri, voi mi tormentate!," when all of Agrippina's schemes are crashing down around her, Handel gives us the vulnerable woman beneath the trickery. He breaks open the conventional da-capo form to create a dramatic scena, splitting the A and B sections of the aria into contrasting moods of anxiety and fierce determination, and also inserting a passage of recitative before the aria's final reprise. With this magnificent piece for both singer and orchestra—note the wailing oboe doppelganger!—he begs our sympathy for this woman caught in a life-and-death struggle.

In her entrance aria, "Vaghe perle," we see only the vain, frivolous side of Poppea as she adorns herself with pearls and flowers. But after Agrippina has tried to poison her love for Ottone, she lets loose in a florid aria of concentrated rage, "Fà quanto vuoi," that reveals what a formidable opponent she will be. The soprano Scarabelli was formidable in her own right, and just before the opera's premiere, she demanded she also be given a suitably impressive "exit aria" to close Act I. Handel complied with "Se giunga un dispetto," packed with testing

coloratura and shimmering trills. Poppea's rhythmically catchy "Bel piacer" in Act III, as she exults over her victory in dispatching Claudio and Nerone, was so popular that Handel transferred it unaltered to *Rinaldo*.

As reigning emperor and emperor-to-be, Claudio and Nerone would be expected to be the most powerful characters, but instead, the opera makes them comic pawns in the hands of the two women. And as supplicants of Poppea's love in Act III, they are treated like fools in a farce. Each presents himself as a prospective lover in a revealing aria. In the frantic "Coll'ardor," Nerone shows himself to be a horny adolescent driven by his hormones rather than the debauched tyrant of historical accounts. Portrayed as physically clumsy and not too bright, Claudio sings an aria of strutting masculinity, "Io di Roma il Giove sono," an unconsciously buffo sendup of the divine status he claims to have.

Poppea's lover Ottone is the only wholly virtuous and noble character in the opera, as he saves Claudio's life then spurns the Roman throne for Poppea's love. In compensation for his lack of comic and dramatic flair, Handel rewards him with arias of great beauty and pathos. His character is epitomized in his sorrowing "Tacerò, purchè fedele" in Act III. This rather old-fashioned aria is a lovely throwback to 17th-century practice, with a viola da gamba playing a ground bass under the singer. In Act II's garden scene, in which Poppea pretends to be asleep, Ottone's ravishing "Vaghe fonte," with its magical atmosphere of sighing flutes, is interrupted by news about Agrippina's plotting—a wonderful example of Handel's flexibility in evading da-capo restraints. But Ottone's signature moment comes in Act II, after he politely sues for the throne Claudio has promised him and the other characters coldly abandon him. Here, Handel expresses the tragedy of his isolation and despair in the opera's only accompanied recitative and the magnificent aria "Voi che udite." Dean rightly calls this "the profoundest aria in the opera, an appeal for sympathy addressed directly to the audience. Both the recitative and the aria, with its clashing [string] suspensions [and] doleful oboe ... are as fine as anything in the London operas, which they strikingly anticipate."

—Janet E. Bedell

Janet E. Bedell is a frequent program annotator for Carnegie Hall, specializing in vocal repertoire, and for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and many other institutions.

The Cast and Creative Team



Harry Bicket

CONDUCTOR (LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Agrippina* and *Così fan tutte* at the Met, *Orphée et Euridice* at English National Opera, Handel's *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Rusalka* at the Santa Fe Opera, and performances across the United States, Europe, and Asia with the English Concert, including concerts of *Rodelinda* and Samuel Adamson's *Gabriel*.

MET APPEARANCES *The Magic Flute*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Giulio Cesare*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, and *Rodelinda* (debut, 2004).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS In 2007, he became artistic director of the English Concert, and, in 2018, he became music director at the Santa Fe Opera, where he had served as chief conductor since 2013. In Santa Fe, he has led *Così fan tutte*, *Candide*, *Alcina*, *Roméo et Juliette*, and *Fidelio*, among many other works. Other recent performances include Handel's *Semele*, *Rinaldo*, *Ariodante*, *Orlando*, and *Hercules* with the English Concert; *Ariodante*, *Orphée et Eurydice*, and *Carmen* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Dido and Aeneas* at Lausanne's Bach Festival; Rossini's *Maometto II* at the Canadian Opera Company; and *Rusalka* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Houston Grand Opera. He has also led the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Prague Philharmonia, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, among others.



Sir David McVicar

DIRECTOR (GLASGOW, SCOTLAND)

THIS SEASON *Agrippina* at the Met, *Death in Venice* at Covent Garden, *Faust* at Opera Australia, *Idomeneo* at Staatsoper Berlin, and *Pelléas et Mélisande* at LA Opera.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Tosca*, *Norma*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Anna Bolena*, *Giulio Cesare*, and *Il Trovatore* (debut, 2009).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS His recent credits include Verdi's *I Masnadieri* at La Scala; Charpentier's *Médée* in Geneva; *Les Troyens* at the Vienna State Opera; *Andrea Chénier*, *Les Troyens*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Aida*, *Salome*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Faust*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden; *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Carmen*, and *La Bohème* at the Glyndebourne Festival; Britten's *Gloriana* in Madrid; *Andrea Chénier* at San Francisco Opera; and *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni* at Opera Australia. His productions have also appeared at the Salzburg Festival, St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, English National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Scottish Opera, Opera North, and in Aix-en-Provence, Tokyo, Strasbourg, Brussels, and Paris. He was knighted in the 2012 Diamond Jubilee Honors List and also made Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government.



John Macfarlane

SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER (GLASGOW, SCOTLAND)

THIS SEASON *Agrippina* and *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Met.
MET PRODUCTIONS *Tosca*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Hansel and Gretel* (debut, 2007).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS His recent operatic credits include *Der Fliegende Holländer* in Quebec; *Erwartung* and *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Peter Grimes*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at Covent Garden; *Elektra* and *Rusalka* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *The Rake's Progress* at Scottish Opera and in Turin; *Agrippina* and *Don Giovanni* in Brussels; *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Queen of Spades* at Welsh National Opera; *Idomeneo* at the Vienna State Opera; von Weber's *Euryanthe* at the Glyndebourne Festival; *War and Peace* and *La Clemenza di Tito* at the Paris Opera; *Boris Godunov* at Dutch National Opera; and *Les Troyens* at English National Opera; among others. He has collaborated with choreographers Glen Tetley and Jiří Kylián, and his designs have also appeared at the Netherlands Dance Theatre, Danish Royal Ballet, London's Royal Ballet, Canadian Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Australian National Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem. He exhibits regularly as a painter and printmaker in Europe and the United States.



Paule Constable

LIGHTING DESIGNER (BRIGHTON, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Agrippina* at the Met, *Billy Budd* at San Francisco Opera, *Death in Venice* at Covent Garden, *Faust* at Opera Australia, *Idomeneo* at Staatsoper Berlin, and *Pelléas et Mélisande* at LA Opera.
MET PRODUCTIONS *Così fan tutte*, *Norma*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, *The Merry Widow*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Don Giovanni*, *Anna Bolena*, and Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* (debut, 2008).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She received Tony Awards for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (for which she also won a Drama Desk Award) and *War Horse*; Tony nominations for *Angels in America*, *Wolf Hall Parts One & Two*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, and *Coram Boy*; and Olivier Awards for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *His Dark Materials* at London's National Theatre, Schiller's *Don Carlos* at London's Gielgud Theatre, and *The Chalk Garden* at the Donmar Warehouse. Her designs for the opera stage have appeared at the Vienna State Opera, Glyndebourne Festival, English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Polish National Opera, Finnish National Opera, Norwegian National Opera, and in Paris, Strasbourg, Tokyo, Geneva, and Florence, among many others.



Andrew George

CHOREOGRAPHER (LONDON, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Agrippina* at the Met.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, *Anna Bolena*, *Giulio Cesare*, and *Don Giovanni* (debut, 2000).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Opera credits include *Andrea Chénier*, *Les Troyens*, *Adriana Lecouvreur* (also at the Vienna State Opera and Paris Opera), and *Salome* at Covent Garden; *The Turn of the Screw*, *Agrippina* (also in Barcelona), Poul Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Die Walküre* at English National Opera; *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (also at Lyric Opera of Chicago), *Giulio Cesare*, (also at Lyric

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Opera of Chicago and in Lille), and *Carmen* at the Glyndebourne Festival; *The Rake's Progress*, *La Traviata* (also at Welsh National Opera and in Geneva, Barcelona, and Madrid), and *Der Rosenkavalier* (also at English National Opera) at Scottish Opera; *A Love for Three Oranges* and *I Capuletti i Montecchi* at Grange Park Opera; and *Rusalka* at San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Canadian Opera Company. His work has appeared at La Scala, Dutch National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Staatsoper Berlin, the Salzburg Festival, St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, and in Tokyo, Brussels, Paris, and Aix-en-Provence.



Joyce DiDonato

MEZZO-SOPRANO (KANSAS CITY, KANSAS)

THIS SEASON The title role of *Agrippina* and Charlotte in *Werther* at the Met, *Agrippina* at Covent Garden, the title role of *Semiramide* in concert in Barcelona, and concerts with Il Pomo d'Oro, the Orchestre Métropolitain, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg. She is also a Carnegie Hall Perspectives Artist, performing Schubert's *Winterreise* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and appearing in concert with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Brentano Quartet, and Il Pomo d'Oro.

MET APPEARANCES Since her 2005 debut as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, she has sung nearly 100 performances of 12 roles, including Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Elena in *La Donna del Lago*, Sycorax in *The Enchanted Island*, Isolier in *Le Comte Ory*, and the title roles of *Cendrillon*, *La Cenerentola*, and *Maria Stuarda*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She has appeared with all of the world's leading opera companies, including the Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, La Scala, Paris Opera, and Salzburg Festival, among many others. She was the 2007 recipient of the Met's Beverly Sills Artist Award, established by Agnes Varis and Karl Leightman.



Kate Lindsey

MEZZO-SOPRANO (RICHMOND, VIRGINIA)

THIS SEASON Nerone in *Agrippina* at the Met, the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and the title role in the world premiere of Olga Neuwirth's *Orlando* at the Vienna State Opera, Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at LA Opera, Korngold's *Tomorrow* at the BBC Proms, and Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* with the Berlin Philharmonie.

MET APPEARANCES Since her 2005 debut as Javotte in *Manon*, she has sung more than 100 performances of 14 roles, include Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Nicklausse / the Muse in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Annio in *La Clemenza di Tito*, Siébel in *Faust*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Wellgunde in the *Ring* cycle, and Stéphanie in *Roméo et Juliette*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Prince Charming in *Cendrillon* and Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Glyndebourne Festival, the title role of Purcell's *Miranda* in Bordeaux and Caen, the Composer in Paris and in concert with the Cleveland Orchestra, the title role of Gounod's *Sapho* at Washington Concert Opera, Nerone in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* at the Salzburg Festival, and the title role of Handel's *Ariodante* in concert with Les Arts Florissants. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



Brenda Rae

SOPRANO (APPLETON, WISCONSIN)

THIS SEASON Poppea in *Agrippina* for her debut at the Met, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* in Madrid, Aminta in Strauss's *Die Schweigsame Frau* at the Bavarian State Opera, the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Vienna State Opera, the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Salzburg Festival, and concert appearances at Opera Philadelphia, with the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, and in Washington, D.C., London, and Schwarzenberg, Austria.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She has sung Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at La Scala, the Bavarian State Opera, and Staatsoper Berlin; the title role of Handel's *Semele* in concert in Paris; Ginevra in Handel's *Ariodante* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Elvira in *I Puritani*, Violetta in *La Traviata* in concert, Amina in *La Sonnambula*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Zdenka in *Arabella* in Frankfurt; Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in Zurich; Amenaide in Rossini's *Tancredi* and Lucia at Opera Philadelphia; Cunegonde in *Candide*, Lucia, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, the Cook in Stravinsky's *The Nightingale*, Vlada Vladimirescu in Mozart's *The Impresario*, and Violetta at the Santa Fe Opera; the Queen of the Night in Tokyo; and the title role of *Lulu* at English National Opera.



Iestyn Davies

COUNTERTENOR (YORK, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON Ottone in *Agrippina* at the Met and Covent Garden, Bertarido in *Rodelinda* in concert in Vienna and at LA Opera, and numerous concerts and recitals in the United States and Europe.

MET APPEARANCES Terry Rutland in Nico Muhly's *Marnie*, Francisco de Ávila in Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Trinculo in Adès's *The Tempest*, and Unulfo in *Rodelinda* (debut, 2011).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* in concert at the Edinburgh International Festival, Ottone at the Bavarian State Opera, Polinesso in Handel's *Ariodante* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and David in Handel's *Saul* at the Glyndebourne Festival. He created the role of Francisco de Ávila in the world premiere of *The Exterminating Angel* at the Salzburg Festival, and in 2017, he made his Broadway debut as Farinelli in Claire van Kampen's *Farinelli and the King*. He has also appeared at La Scala, Covent Garden, English National Opera, the Aldeburgh Festival, the Kilkenny Arts Festival, and with Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, the English Concert, and Les Arts Florissants.



Duncan Rock

BARITONE (EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND)

THIS SEASON Pallante in *Agrippina* at the Met, Silvio in *Pagliacci* in Barcelona, Jan in Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* at the Adelaide Festival, Schaunard in *La Bohème* at Covent Garden, and concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra.

MET APPEARANCES Papageno in *The Magic Flute* and Schaunard (debut, 2017).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Jan at the Edinburgh International Festival and Scottish Opera, Peter in *Hansel and Gretel* at English National Opera, Donald in *Billy Budd* at Covent Garden, Tarquinius in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at Boston Lyric Opera, the title role of *Don Giovanni* in Brisbane, and Charles Blount in Britten's *Gloriana* in Madrid.

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He has also sung the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Garsington Opera and in concert in Paris; Donald in Madrid; Don Giovanni on tour, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Tarquinius with the Glyndebourne Festival; Billy Bigelow in *Carousel* at Houston Grand Opera; Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore* and Marcello in *La Bohème* at Opera North; Marcello and Papageno at English National Opera; Don Giovanni at Boston Lyric Opera, Welsh National Opera, and with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra; and Tarquinius at Deutsche Oper Berlin.



Matthew Rose

BASS (BRIGHTON, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON Claudio in *Agrippina* at the Met, Giacomo Balducci in *Benvenuto Cellini* in concert with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, Leporello in *Don Giovanni* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Bach's *St. John Passion* in London, Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier* in Brussels, Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress* at the Glyndebourne Festival, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Poland's Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra.

MET APPEARANCES Ashby in *La Fanciulla del West*, Colline in *La Bohème* (debut, 2011), Oroveso in *Norma*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Leporello and Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, the Night Watchman in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Talbot in *Maria Stuarda*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Pimen in *Boris Godunov* at Covent Garden, Bottom at Opera Philadelphia, and the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo* at Deutsche Oper Berlin. He has also sung Hunding in *Die Walküre* in concert at the Edinburgh International Festival; Bottom at the Aldeburgh Festival, Glyndebourne Festival, and La Scala; Leporello in Dresden; King Marke in *Tristan und Isolde* at English National Opera; and Baron Ochs, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Masetto, and Bottom at Covent Garden.



Nicholas Tamagna

COUNTERTENOR (CORTLANDT MANOR, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON Narciso in *Agrippina* for his debut at the Met; the title role of Handel's *Rinaldo* in Berlin and Kempten, Germany; and the Refugee in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* in Oldenburg, Germany.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Ruggiero in Handel's *Alcina* in Bad Lauchstädt, Germany; Silvio in *Il Pastor Fido* at the Handel Festival Halle; Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione de Poppea* at Milwaukee's Florentine Opera; Ermanno in Vinci's *Gismondo* in concert in Vienna; Amore in Melani's *L'Europa* in Potsdam, Germany; and the title role of Hasse's *Siroe* with Dutch Touring Opera and in Oldenburg. He has also sung the Refugee at Opera Omaha; the Spirit in *Dido and Aeneas* in Versailles and Normandy; Polinesso in Handel's *Ariodante* in Münster, Germany; Oronte in Handel's *Riccardo Primo* in Karlsruhe, Germany; Peisander in Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* at Opera Omnia; the title role of Philip Glass's *Akhmaten* in a coproduction by Indianapolis Opera and Indiana University Opera; and the Prologue in Zaretsky's *Man in a Black Coat* and Farnace in Mozart's *Mitridate* at Little Opera Theatre of New York.