

PHILIP GLASS

AKHNATEN

CONDUCTOR

Karen Kamensek

PRODUCTION

Phelim McDermott

SET AND PROJECTION DESIGNER

Tom Pye

COSTUME DESIGNER

Kevin Pollard

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Bruno Poet

CHOREOGRAPHER

Sean Gandini

GENERAL MANAGER

Peter Gelb

JEANETTE LERMAN-NEUBAUER
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Philip Glass in association with Shalom Goldman, Robert Israel, Richard Riddell, and Jerome Robbins

Vocal text drawn from original sources by Shalom Goldman

Saturday, November 23, 2019

1:00–4:45PM

New Production

The production of *Akhnatén* was made possible by a generous gift from the **Rosalie J. Coe Weir Endowment Fund** and the **Wyncote Foundation**, as recommended by **Frederick R. Haas and Rafael Gomez**

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

In collaboration with Improbable

The Metropolitan Opera

2019-20 SEASON

The fifth Metropolitan Opera performance of
PHILIP GLASS'S

AKHNATEN

CONDUCTOR
Karen Kamensek

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

AMENHOTEP III
Zachary James

AYE, NEFERTITI'S FATHER
Richard Bernstein

HIGH PRIEST OF AMON
Aaron Blake

GENERAL HOREMHAB
Will Liverman

AKHNATEN
Anthony Roth Costanzo

QUEEN TYE,
AKHNATEN'S MOTHER
Disella Lárusdóttir

NEFERTITI, AKHNATEN'S WIFE
J'Nai Bridges

AKHNATEN'S DAUGHTERS
BEKHETATEN
Lindsay Ohse
MERETATEN
Karen Chia-Ling Ho
MAKETATEN
Chrystal E. Williams

ANKHESENPAATEN
Annie Rosen
NEFERNEFERUATEN
Olivia Vote
SOTOPENRE
Suzanne Hendrix

A PROFESSOR
Zachary James

YOUNG TUTANKHAMUN
Christian J. Conner

SKILLS ENSEMBLE
Sean Gandini
Kelsey Strauch
Sean Blue
Doreen Grossmann
Liza van Brakel
Iñaki Fernández Sastre
Michael Karas
Kim Huynh
Shane Miclon
Kati Ylä-Hokkala
Christian Kloc
Brian Koenig

Saturday, November 23, 2019, 1:00-4:45PM

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Musical Preparation **Caren Levine***, **Jonathan C. Kelly**,
Patrick Furrer, **Dimitri Dover***, and **Zalman Kelber***
Assistant Stage Directors **Sarah Ina Meyers**, **Louisa Muller**,
Peter Relton, and **J. Knighten Smit**
Met Titles **Michael Panayos**
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2019-20 SEASON

A scene from Puccini's *La Bohème*

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Synopsis

Act I

Year 1 of Akhnaten's reign. Thebes.

Funeral of Amenhotep III

The opera begins with the death of Amenhotep III. We see him first revealed both as a corpse and as a ghostly figure, reciting an Egyptian funerary incantation. During the funeral ceremony, we see a sacred ritual performed in which the body's organs are carefully taken out and placed into canopic jars and the body is wrapped and embalmed. A ceremony takes place that represents a ritual occurring in the Book of the Dead, in which the pharaoh's heart is weighed against a feather: If his heart is as light as this, it will ensure that Amenhotep will travel through into the afterlife.

Coronation of Akhnaten

The figure of Amenhotep's son steps forward, and the coronation ceremony begins. The new pharaoh is dressed in sacred robes, and the crowns representing Upper and Lower Egypt are brought together to symbolize Amenhotep IV's power over all of Egypt. Once he is crowned, the new pharaoh rises up the stairs to make his first pronouncement.

The Window of Appearances

At the Window of Appearances, the pharaoh reveals his intentions to form a monotheistic religion. He changes his name from Amenhotep IV, meaning "spirit of Amon," to Akhnaten, meaning "spirit of Aten." Akhnaten, Nefertiti, and Queen Tye glorify Aten, a form of the sun god, Ra. As the trio makes their pronouncement at the window, the sun rises behind them.

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 1:50PM)

Act II

Years 5 to 15. Thebes and Akhetaten.

The Temple

Akhnaten and Queen Tye begin to make the changes that he has promised. He leads a revolt to banish the old religion and replace it with his own. Akhnaten enters the temple and finds the priests performing the old religious rituals. Akhnaten banishes them and forms the new order of Aten.

Akhnaten and Nefertiti

Akhnaten and Nefertiti affirm their love for each other.

The City

The site for a new city is chosen carefully. The new city of Akhetaten—"the City of the Horizon of Aten"—is built in praise of the new religion.

Hymn

Akhnaten sings a private prayer to his god. His vision of a new religion and a new society is complete.

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 3:10PM)

Act III

Year 17 and the present. Akhetaten.

The Family

Akhnaten and Nefertiti dwell in an insular world of their own creation with their six daughters. Meanwhile, Queen Tye is uneasy. She senses unrest beyond the city's walls. Crowds gather outside the gates, and letters arrive expressing increasing concern about Akhnaten's self-imposed isolation.

Attack and Fall

The priests of Amon emerge from the gathering crowds and break through the palace doors. The daughters try to escape and are drawn away from Akhnaten and into the swelling mass. Queen Tye and Nefertiti are also separated from Akhnaten, who is ultimately killed.

The Ruins

The spirit of Akhnaten's father mourns his son's death. Meanwhile, the new pharaoh, the young Tutankhamun, is crowned in a ceremony similar to that of his father, and the old polytheistic religion is restored. Intercutting this ceremony, a group of modern-day students is listening to a lecture given by a professor.

Epilogue

The ghosts of Akhnaten, Nefertiti, and Queen Tye are heard from the ancient world once again.

Synopsis reprinted courtesy of English National Opera.

Philip Glass

Akhnaten

Premiere: Staatsoper, Stuttgart, 1984

The final installment of Philip Glass's Portrait Trilogy (along with *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha*), *Akhnaten* is a powerfully meditative narrative concerning the impact of the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep IV, known as Akhnaten, "spirit of the Aten"—"Aten" being a name for the sun disk, thought to be an aspect of the sun god, Ra. (Today, Akhnaten is more commonly referred to as "Akhenaten.") Akhnaten's successors deliberately destroyed most of the records of his life, so any discussion about him must be reconstructed from a blend of history, archaeology, and a degree of speculation. It is known that his reign represented a period of unique and violent upheaval in the 3,000-year epoch of the pharaohs. He abolished the already ancient polytheistic order of Egyptian society in order to institute a state religion of monotheistic sun worship but was overthrown after 17 years, and the capital city he built, Akhetaten, was destroyed. Another surviving aspect of this king was his love for his wife, the great beauty Nefertiti, enshrined in surviving fragments of stunning love poetry. *Akhnaten* is one of Glass's three large-scale operas based on a "big idea," in this case monotheism, following *Einstein on the Beach*, which dealt with new notions of time and space, and *Satyagraha*, which explored the spiritual and political revelation of non-violence. *Satyagraha* and *Akhnaten*, especially, deal largely with the unseen forces affecting the inner (psychological), interpersonal (political), and universal (mystical) aspects of existence, subjects that are uniquely portrayed by the composer's entrancing musical lines.

The Creators

Philip Glass (b. 1937) is a prolific and influential American composer whose diverse body of work has included film scores, chamber music, music for dance and other theatrical pieces, and various forms of opera. Glass's work is the result of a remarkable blend of traditional training and many other broad, international influences. His numerous collaborations (with artists as varied as Robert Wilson, David Bowie, Brian Eno, and Martin Scorsese) have drawn to his music a wide range of listeners well beyond the established institutions. Glass worked with a team of collaborators to create the libretto for *Akhnaten*, which is sung in four different languages—ancient Egyptian, Akkadian, Hebrew, and the language spoken by the audience, depending on where the performance is taking place. The text of the opera was compiled from various sources, including ancient inscriptions and letters, the Bible's Psalm 104, and a Fodor guide to Egypt.

The Setting

Akhnaten is set during the 17-year reign of Akhnaten, around 1350 B.C.E. There is also an episode in the present day in which a modern guide ruminates on the legacy of the pharaoh while the spirits of Akhnaten and his family continue their journey in the afterlife. The location moves between the ancient Egyptian capital of Thebes and Akhnaten's new capital city at Akhetaten, as well as the ruins of the subsequently destroyed Akhetaten.

The Music

The score of this opera is lyrical, elegiac, and, while clearly a product of its famous composer (whose intricate, repetitive sonic textures unfold differently than most other classical music), is among the most easily appreciated of his creations. The orchestra is standard except for the absence of violins, which accentuates the lower strings, woodwinds, and brass to create a somber eeriness in much of the score. Percussion features prominently, particularly during the remarkable music for the funeral of Akhnaten's father in Act I. The vocal lines also tend toward the melodic, even if they are original and remarkable. The title role is sung by a countertenor, and his wife, Nefertiti, is sung by a contralto or mezzo-soprano—in their first vocal appearance (at the Window of Appearances in Act I), she sings lower notes than he does. The couple has love music that morphs into sun-worship music and back, convincingly depicting the relationships between erotic and spiritual love. The largest and most distinct solo is Akhnaten's extended Hymn to the Sun in Act II, always (per the composer's instructions) sung in the language of the audience. Other soloists span the spectrum of vocal ranges, from bass (the advisor Aye) to baritone (General Horemhab) to tenor (the High Priest of Amon) to soprano (Tye, the queen mother). Akhnaten and Nefertiti's six daughters are three sopranos and three contraltos (or mezzo-sopranos). There is a speaking role as well—who gives translations of the sung texts and later offers a modern day reading from a guidebook over the ruins of Akhnaten's city, further adding to the remote historicity of the opera's sound. The chorus has an important role throughout, appearing as priests in the beginning, people of Egypt throughout, and the spirits of the departed at the end.

Met History

On November 8, 2019, *Akhnaten* had its Met premiere, in a production by Phelim McDermott, who also staged the company premiere of *Satyagraha* in 2008. Karen Kamensek made her Met debut conducting Anthony Roth Costanzo in the title role, alongside Dísella Lárusdóttir, J'Nai Bridges, Aaron Blake, Will Liverman, Richard Bernstein, and Zachary James.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Designer Christian Louboutin may seem like the absolute embodiment of Parisian chic, but his heritage on his father's side is, in fact, Egyptian—so it makes perfect sense that the world's preeminent creator of luxury footwear would find inspiration in the Met's new production of Philip Glass's *Akhnaten*, about the ancient Egyptian pharaoh.

On the occasion of this landmark Met premiere, Louboutin has designed a one-of-a-kind precious art piece, at left, that will be displayed on the Parterre level of the opera house for the duration of the run of the opera.

Cleverly referencing Kevin Pollard's costumes and Tom Pye's sets for the production, the hand-made pieces evoke images of Ra, the sun god. Otherworldly discs of gold leaf and embellished shoe-shaped thrones are complemented with Louboutin's signature "levitating" heel design, giving the figures the appearance of floating in mid-air.

And that's not the only Louboutin creation that can be seen at the Met this month. The designer was so taken with the look of *Akhnaten* that he has also provided the dazzlingly intricate gold leather sneaker, below, worn on stage by the child Tutankhamun at the end of the opera. **M**



Program Note

On January 6, 1907, the entrance to a rock-cut tomb was uncovered in the Valley of the Kings outside modern-day Luxor, Egypt. The mummy safeguarded within may have been the preserved body of the pharaoh Akhnaten (today more commonly known as Akhenaten). Rigorous DNA testing conducted in 2010 was reported to have confirmed that identification, though the matter remains hotly contested—like just about everything else associated with this most controversial of ancient Egypt’s vast lineage of rulers.

Why did Philip Glass choose Akhnaten as the topic for his third opera—a figure so distant in time from the protagonists of his first two operas and so obscure in comparison to them? He started from the premise of wanting to complete a trilogy of “portrait” operas about historical figures whose vision and ideas—in contrast to the violent power of warfare—had effected radical social change and transformed our understanding of the world.

The first two installments of the trilogy, *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) and *Satyagraha* (1980), had focused on well-known figures who left their respective marks principally in the areas of science (Albert Einstein’s revolutionary theory of relativity) and politics (Mahatma Gandhi and his advocacy of non-violent resistance in the face of social injustice).

The 14th-century-B.C.E. Egyptian pharaoh seized the composer’s imagination as a fitting counterpart in that he represented the realm of religion and would lend historical perspective to a trilogy whose other two subjects were drawn from the modern era. “We know Akhnaten as a man of ideas and, to me, the entire history of humanity is a history of ideas, of culture,” Glass reflected in his 1987 memoir, *Music by Philip Glass*.

While he was preparing the groundwork for *Akhnaten* in the early 1980s, Glass decided to turn the uncertainties and tantalizing gaps in our knowledge about the pharaoh to his theatrical advantage. He traveled to Egypt to gather impressions from relevant archeological sites and visited the Cairo Museum, where the elusive fragments gathered in a room devoted to Akhnaten inspired an epiphany about how to proceed with the work-in-progress.

As Glass recalled it: “It seemed to me, at that moment, that we needed no more story than was already there, that the missing pieces, far from needing to be filled in or explained, actually added to the mystery and beauty of our subject.” With the “mere bits and pieces” relating to the ruler that Glass and his team of collaborators had at their disposal, the essential outlines of the scenario took shape and allowed the composer to form “a highly personal vision” of Akhnaten and his era.

The fact that Akhnaten had even existed lay buried for millennia. In the aftermath of the overthrow depicted in the opera’s final scenes, the pharaoh was violently effaced from official history, his revolutionary ideas rejected and revoked. Akhetaten, the new capital city that he founded—which Glass dramatizes in the second act, at the center of the opera—was abandoned and crumbled into

ruins. Only with its rediscovery during the archeological expeditions of the 19th century did evidence of the historical Akhnaten emerge, breaking the spell of what Glass calls “a forced amnesia.”

The deliberate suppression of all memory of Akhnaten suggests how radical his challenges to the incredibly conservative social order of ancient Egypt must have been. During his relatively brief, 17-year reign (from 1375 to 1358 B.C.E. in the chronology that the opera uses), longstanding traditions of artistic expression gave way to unprecedented stylistic changes—such as tender, naturalistic depictions of the pharaoh with his wife, Nefertiti, and their daughters.

But the most radical transformation by far was of religious ideology. Within a few years of assuming power, the pharaoh changed his name from Amenhotep IV to Akhnaten to signal allegiance to Aten, an abstract deity associated with the sun god (Ra). He established Aten as the supreme god, overturning the traditional polytheistic hierarchy and disbanding the class of priests whose power derived from rival gods.

According to Shalom Goldman, a professor of religion and ancient languages whom Glass enlisted as a scholarly consultant on this project, Akhnaten’s “rebellion against the massive weight of tradition encompassed religion, statecraft, art, and language; and in each of these areas he attempted revolutionary innovations.” At the time a graduate student at New York University, Goldman worked with Glass to compile the collage of primary-text sources that make up *Akhnaten*’s unusual libretto. The chief sources include poem fragments, inscriptions, diplomatic letters inscribed on cuneiform tablets, and legal decrees. These texts are sung in the original ancient languages (Egyptian or Akkadian, the diplomatic language that had developed in Mesopotamia).

A significant exception is the Hymn to the Sun (attributed to the pharaoh himself), which Akhnaten sings in the pivotal final scene of Act II. Glass requests this aria to be sung in the vernacular language of the audience. English is also spoken in this performance by a narrator figure, whose commentary provides translations of the primary-source texts. In the third scene of Act III, with its dramatic time shift to the present, the narrator additionally reads excerpts from a Fodor’s travel guide about the ruins of the ancient city.

And there is a fourth language, which signifies another reason for Glass’s fascination with the figure of Akhnaten: ancient Hebrew, for the choral setting of Psalm 104 sung off stage as a counterpart to the Hymn to the Sun. The psalm’s uncanny echoes of the Egyptian hymn, for Glass, are meant “to underline the connection of Akhnaten’s ideas with those of our own time and culture.” The composer’s reference is to the controversial theory that Sigmund Freud famously advanced in his 1938 essay collection *Moses and Monotheism*, that Akhnaten’s suppressed religious revolution survived and re-emerged—channeled by Moses—as ancient Jewish monotheism.

When Glass was in search of a subject for his third “portrait” opera, it was an even more controversial interpretation of the pharaoh’s significance that initially inspired him to consider Akhnaten. A voracious reader, Glass chanced upon a book in which the bestselling “catastrophist” writer Immanuel Velikovsky (1895–1979) argued that the Greek mythical figure of Oedipus was modeled on actual events from Akhnaten’s life.

In his original concept, Glass contemplated a simultaneous presentation of the stories of Akhnaten and Oedipus (staged upstage and downstage, respectively) and intended to collaborate with Velikovsky as his librettist. But the writer died before they could meet, and Glass soon abandoned his twin-plot concept. As he writes in *Words Without Music*, his more recent memoir, Akhnaten “became much more interesting than Oedipus. We think of the ancient world as Greece, but the ancient world was really Egypt.” Rereading Freud’s book “convinced me that Akhnaten was the person I was looking for.”

Akhnaten originated as a commission from Stuttgart Opera, and because the 1984 world premiere would take place while the company’s main house was being renovated, Glass’s orchestral forces would need to fit in a smaller pit space. He decided to downsize by doing without the entire violin section. Still, *Akhnaten*’s sound world, while unquestionably in its composer’s unique voice, is overall closer than its two predecessors to more conventional operatic scoring. (*Einstein* was written for non-operatically trained voices and Glass’s own amplified ensemble, while *Satyagraha*’s orchestra was limited to woodwinds and strings).

Glass made a virtue of the lack of violins by drawing out the darker colors that result. The inventive use of percussion (timpani omitted, also for space reasons) and combinations of wind and brass moreover allow for richly contrasted textures. A striking example that carries symbolic weight for the opera’s dramatic ideas is the juxtaposition of aggressive, militaristic drumming during the funeral ceremonies for Amenhotep III—the sound of the “old order” that his son dares to subvert—with the sonorities associated with Akhnaten, such as the solo trumpet or, in his beautiful duet with Nefertiti, a pair of solo cello.

The composer’s instincts as a musical dramatist are particularly effective in *Akhnaten*’s vocal casting. How to represent a figure “so unusual, even unique, as to be virtually unprecedented in Egyptian, and therefore human, history”? Glass opted to cast the pharaoh as a countertenor (one of several neo-Baroque touches to this score). While the renaissance of interest in the countertenor voice has made it much more familiar than it was when Glass initially wrote this music in the early 1980s, Akhnaten’s singing retains a startling effect—at least initially—since he is a silent visual presence onstage until well into the first act. Glass writes Nefertiti as a contralto to be closer in range to her spouse and makes his mother, Queen Tye, a soprano.

The opera's tonal palette and use of thematic devices identified with characters or actions mark a departure from Glass's earlier practice. His experiments with polytonality (presenting more than one key at the same time, creating multiple harmonic centers of gravity) impart a greater feeling of ambiguity. The composer has compared the perception of ambivalence that results from his harmonic language to the kind of optical illusion associated with the paintings of Josef Albers, "where you could look at it two ways, but not both ways at once; it can't resolve itself." *Akhnaten*, he adds, "was my first extension out of a triadic harmonic language that had been fairly simple up until then."

Akhnaten's Hymn to the Sun provides a moment of radiant A major at the center, but the looming presence of A minor—the key in which the opera begins and ends—"stretch[es] over the score, and over the theater, like a shroud," to quote the *Village Voice* critic Leighton Kerner. At the end of *Akhnaten*, Glass quotes a thematic cell from the very beginning of the Portrait Trilogy—the opening scene of *Einstein on the Beach*—but there is no sense of a "return" to where we began.

In Michael Blackwood's 1985 documentary on the making of *Akhnaten* (*A Composer's Notes: Philip Glass and the Making of an Opera*, which is available on YouTube), the composer reiterated the relevance of this ancient tragedy for our situation: "There's nothing in the story that isn't contemporary, really; it's about power, and upholding old ideas, and trying to force new ideas into the world, and what happens to the people that do that."

—Thomas May

Thomas May is a writer, critic, educator, and translator. His books include Decoding Wagner and The John Adams Reader, and he blogs at memeteria.com.



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MUSIC IN THE AIR

One of the most memorable aspects of Phelim McDermott's production is its incorporation of mesmerizing juggling, designed by choreographer and juggling master Sean Gandini, which seems to make Philip Glass's music appear before one's very eyes.

As he looked ahead to directing *Akhnaten*, Phelim McDermott puzzled over how to approach Philip Glass's opera of ancient Egypt. The idea for one of the signature elements of his new staging finally came to him while he was bobbing in a flotation tank: "I got the image of juggling balls, repetitive patterns," he recalls. At first, the thought of making juggling a central part of an opera production seemed too far-fetched even for the inventive McDermott, who used newspaper and giant puppetry to tell the story of Gandhi in Glass's *Satyagraha*, and who set Mozart's *Così fan tutte* amid a Coney Island sideshow. "A bit of your brain thinks it's too much, too crazy," he remembers, "but you feel in your body, in your bones, that it's actually a good idea."

So he turned to the man he calls the "artistic master" of the form—Sean Gandini of Gandini Juggling, a virtuoso and prolific company which had previously choreographed mind-blowing juggling routines set to music by Vivaldi and Steve Reich. Gandini



C. SCHNEIDER



KAREN ALMOND/MET OPERA

was amazed at McDermott's proposal: "What Phelim didn't know, and what to me was quite an extraordinary coincidence, is that the first recorded images of juggling are these magnificent Egyptian hieroglyphics." He told McDermott about depictions of a trio of women jugglers (pictured left) found in the Beni Hasan cemetery complex from ancient Middle Egypt—images the production brings to life with "an imaginary Egyptian juggling language" in the opening funeral scene.

Choreographed movement, arising from the story and the music, infuses the three-act opera. The production includes a ten-member juggling ensemble (pictured above), who fill the air above the stage with as many as 50 flying objects at a time. Using items of varying size—from standard juggling balls to clubs to beach-ball-like inflatable orbs—they juggle their way through a dizzying sequence of patterns that mirror the speed, intensity, and complex rhythms of the music, sometimes working independently and sometimes lofting their projectiles in long arcs to their counterparts across the stage.

"There's this kind of visual magic that the juggling can play," says countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, who sings the title role. He describes his favorite part of the opera, his death scene: All ten jugglers are on stage, throwing their balls very high and fast. "I'm at the center of that, moving very, very slowly," Costanzo explains, "but you're not in any way distracted by the balls because they become this movement-texture."

Different working systems had to be married in rehearsals. "Sean and Karen [Kamensek, the conductor] ended up doing a kind of mathematical research to perfect how the juggling would fit the music and the repetitions," McDermott says. Further complicating matters, jugglers count their patterns and timings differently from how musicians count their music, so some translation was necessary to make sure everyone was on the same page.

And what happens when someone literally drops the ball? "You can't do this amount of juggling in a show without dropping," says McDermott. "When they do, they have to ritualistically get down on their knees and do penance to the Sun God. The [audience] sees that it's part of the show, and they relax. What you want is for the audience to forget they're watching juggling. You hit this moment where they don't quite know what they saw, and think, 'Did I imagine that?'" —*Elena Park*

DECODING DESIRE



"Aria Code," the hit podcast from the Met and WQXR, is back for a second season—and this time, the theme is desire in all its forms.

When the Met and WQXR decided to collaborate last season on the creation of a new podcast, the idea was to explore some of opera's greatest arias and allow people to hear them in a whole new way. In "Aria Code," top opera stars would talk through the process of learning, rehearsing, and performing some of the best-known arias in the repertoire, from Tosca's "Vissi d'arte" to Violetta's "Sempre libera" to Rodolfo's "Che gelida manina"—with noted actors, writers, psychologists, scientists, and other expert guests providing additional color commentary.

Little did the companies expect, however, that "Aria Code" would become a podcast sensation. "I didn't know that I needed an opera podcast in my life until I heard the trailer for 'Aria Code,'" declared *The New Yorker*. "An elegantly constructed, effortlessly listenable series."

The *New York Times* agreed, calling the podcast "luminous ... A major event and a gift."

This month, the series returns, once again hosted by the Grammy Award-winning (and opera-trained) folk singer Rhiannon Giddens. The first episode features superstar diva Anna Netrebko talking about Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene from Verdi's *Macbeth*, which the soprano performed memorably earlier this season. But it's not just Netrebko who weighs in on the murderous queen; none other than Dame Judi Dench also shares her thoughts on the motivations and machinations of this timeless character.

The *Macbeth* episode is the first of ten new installments, which will also look at moments from *Porgy and Bess*, *Turandot*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and others, featuring such Met stars as Renée Fleming, Christine Goerke, and Eric Owens. The hope is that opera lovers will continue to find their favorite works illuminated, while newcomers will discover that opera is, indeed, for them. Or, as *The New Yorker* put it in their review of the series, "It encourages fandom through substance, by showing us the art itself." **M**

Listen to Seasons 1 and 2 on your desktop or phone at ariacode.org.

The Cast and Creative Team



Philip Glass

COMPOSER (BALTIMORE, MARYLAND)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS *Akhnaten* is the fourth of Philip Glass's operas to be presented at the Met, following *Einstein on the Beach*, *The Voyage*, and *Satyagraha*. *The Voyage* was commissioned and premiered by the company in 1992 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas. One of the most prolific and influential composers in the history of American classical music, his vast output includes 28 operas; 12 symphonies; three piano concerti; concerti for violin, piano, timpani, and saxophone quartet and orchestra; film scores; string quartets; and a growing body of work for solo piano and organ. Over the course of his career, he has collaborated with a number of notable artists from across disciplines, including David Bowie, Allen Ginsberg, Yo-Yo Ma, Linda Ronstadt, Paul Simon, Twyla Tharp, and Robert Wilson, among many others. A musical pioneer and largely credited with the creation of the minimalist style, he founded the Philip Glass Ensemble in 1968. He presents lectures, workshops, and solo keyboard performances around the world.



Karen Kamensek

CONDUCTOR (CHICAGO, ILLINOIS)

THIS SEASON *Akhnaten* for her debut at the Met; *La Bohème* in Gothenburg, Sweden; *Don Giovanni* at Minnesota Opera; and concert appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra, Austria's Tonkünstler Orchestra, and in Malmö and Nantes.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She served as music director and chief conductor of Staatsoper Hannover between 2011 and 2016 and music director of Theater Freiburg between 2003 and 2006. She has also held tenures as deputy music director of Staatsoper Hamburg, interim chief conductor at the Maribor Slovene National Theatre, and first Kapellmeister at the Vienna Volksoper. She regularly conducts the works of Philip Glass, including his *Orphée* in New York and Germany, the world premiere of *Les Enfants Terribles* at Spoleto Festival USA, *Satyagraha* and *Akhnaten* at English National Opera, and *Passages* at the BBC Proms and Philharmonie de Paris. She has also conducted at Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Royal Danish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera Australia, Israeli Opera, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, San Diego Opera; in Frankfurt and Bergen, Norway; and with numerous prominent orchestras throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.



PHOTO: JONATHAN TICHLER/MET OPERA

The Metropolitan Opera is pleased to salute the Annenberg Foundation and, most recently, GRoW @ Annenberg for its new Broadcast Campaign commitment in support of the Saturday Matinee Radio Broadcasts. We especially thank Gregory Annenberg Weingarten and his wife, Regina Weingarten, for helping make this contribution possible.

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The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Phelim McDermott

DIRECTOR (MANCHESTER, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Akhnatén* at the Met and *Aida* in Geneva and at Houston Grand Opera.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Così fan tutte*, *The Enchanted Island*, Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* (debut, 2008), and the 125th Anniversary Gala.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has been performing and directing since 1984. In 1996, he co-founded the theater company Improbable, with whom he has produced a number of productions, including the Obie Award-winning *70 Hill Lane*, *Lifegame*, *Animo*, *Coma*, *Spirit*, *Sticky*, *Cinderella*, *The Hanging Man*, *Theatre Of Blood* (in collaboration with London's National Theatre), *Panic*, *Beauty and the Beast* (a co-production with ONEOFUS), *Shockheaded Peter* (which won an Olivier Award) and, most recently, *Opening Skinner's Box* at the Lincoln Center Festival. His operatic credits include Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, *The Perfect American*, and *Akhnatén* (which won the 2017 Olivier Award for Best New Opera Production), as well as *Così fan tutte* and *Aida* at English National Opera, *Akhnatén* at LA Opera, and Helmut Lachenmann's *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* at Spoleto Festival USA. He recently directed *Bambino*, a classical opera by Liam Patterson for children between six and 18 months old, for Scottish Opera and at the Met.



Tom Pye

SET AND PROJECTION DESIGNER (LINCOLN, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Akhnatén* at the Met and *Aida* in Geneva and at Houston Grand Opera.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Così fan tutte*, *Eugene Onegin* (debut, 2013), and John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS His operatic credits include *Aida*, *Akhnatén*, Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *Eugene Onegin*, Vaughan Williams's *Riders to the Sea*, and the world premiere of Julian Anderson's *Thebans*, among others, at English National Opera; *Akhnatén* at LA Opera; *The Turn of the Screw* and the world premiere of Judith Weir's *Miss Fortune* at Covent Garden; the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin's *Crossing* at Boston's American Repertory Theater; *The Cunning Little Vixen* at the Glyndebourne Festival; *Death in Venice* at La Scala; *Così fan tutte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni* in Lyon; and Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at the Bavarian State Opera. He has also designed for numerous productions on Broadway, in the West End, and at London's National Theatre and Royal Court Theatre, among others. His ballet credits include *Anna Karenina* for the Joffrey Ballet and *The Nutcracker* for Atlanta Ballet. His most recent costume designs for film and television include BBC/HBO's *Gentleman Jack* and BBC/PBS's *To Walk Invisible*.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Kevin Pollard

COSTUME DESIGNER (LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Akhnaten* at the Met and *Aida* in Geneva and at Houston Grand Opera.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, *50 Years at Lincoln Center Gala*, Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* (debut, 2008), and *The Enchanted Island*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS His operatic credits include *Akhnaten*, *Aida*, *Satyagraha*, and *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* at English National Opera; *Ernani* and *Hänsel und Gretel* at La Scala; Purcell's *King Arthur* at Staatsoper Berlin; *Die Zauberflöte* at Welsh National Opera; Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin* at English National Opera, the Canadian Opera Company, and in Antwerp; and *Mackie Messer* at the Salzburg Festival. He has also designed for productions of *Shockheaded Peter* at Leeds's West Yorkshire Playhouse and on tour internationally (for which he was nominated for an Olivier Award and a Drama Desk Award); *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* for London's National Theatre; *Danny Champion of the World* (also sets) at Liverpool's Spike Theatre; *Beauty and the Beast* at the Young Vic Theatre; *Tmesis*, *Memento Mori*, *Anima*, and *The Dreadful Hours* (also sets) for the Tmesis Theatre Company; and *Ménage À Trois* for the National Theatre of Scotland; among others. He regularly lectures on costume design.



Bruno Poet

LIGHTING DESIGNER (LONDON, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON *Akhnaten* for his debut at the Met, Enjott Schneider's *Marco Polo* in Genoa, the world premiere of Hans Abrahamsen's *Snedronningen* at the Royal Danish Opera, *Aida* at Houston Grand Opera, and *Tina* on Broadway.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has designed for numerous production in the West End, including *Tina*, *Miss Saigon* (also on Broadway), and *From Here to Eternity*, and for London's National Theatre, including *Light Shinning in Buckinghamshire*, *Treasure Island*, *Frankenstein* (for which he won an Olivier Award in 2012), *Morning to Midnight*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Travelling Light*. His designs for opera have appeared at Covent Garden, English National Opera, Staatsoper Berlin, the Bregenz Festival, Norwegian National Opera, the Edinburgh International Festival, Opera Australia, Grange Park Opera, Opera North, Garsington Festival, LA Opera, Washington National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and in Madrid, Barcelona, Vienna, Monte Carlo, Stockholm, Geneva, Verona, and Strasbourg, among others. He has also designed for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Old Vic Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, London's Royal Ballet, Scottish Dance Theatre, and tours by Björk, Sigur Rós, and Jónsi.



Sean Gandini

CHOREOGRAPHER (HAVANA, CUBA)

THIS SEASON *Akhnatn* for his debut at the Met and performances with Gandini Juggling.
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He is the co-artistic director of Gandini Juggling, which he founded in 1991 with his wife, Kati Ylä-Hokkala. The company has made 30 full-length pieces, which have been performed in more than 50 countries. In London, they have performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre and the Royal Opera House. Their global hit *Smashed*, a homage to the late Pina Bausch, has become one of the emblematic pieces of contemporary circus. The company is currently working on a new piece entitled *LIFE*, based around juggling interpretations of Merce Cunningham's work. He is also renowned as one of the leading teachers of juggling.



J'Nai Bridges

MEZZO-SOPRANO (TACOMA, WASHINGTON)

THIS SEASON Nefertiti in *Akhnatn* for her debut at the Met, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* at Washington National Opera, the title role of *Carmen* at Dutch National Opera, and concert appearances with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, San Antonio Symphony, and at the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and BBC Proms.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Federica in *Luisa Miller* in Barcelona, the title role of *Carmen* and Josef Segovia in the world premiere of John Adams's *Girls of the Golden West* at San Francisco Opera, Josef Segovia at Dutch National Opera, Kasturbai in Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* at LA Opera, and Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino* in Zurich. She has also sung Bersi in *Andrea Chénier* at the Bavarian State Opera, San Francisco Opera, and in concert in Paris; Sister Helen Prejean in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* at Vancouver Opera; Nefertiti at LA Opera; Carmen in the world premiere of Jimmy López's *Bel Canto* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* at San Diego Opera. She has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, Philadelphia Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, among others.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Dísella Lárusdóttir

SOPRANO (MOSFELLSBÆR, ICELAND)

THIS SEASON Queen Tye in *Akhnaten* at the Met.

MET APPEARANCES A Shadow Marnie in Nico Muhly's *Marnie*, a Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*, Giannetta in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, Barena in *Jenůfa*, a Wood Nymph in *Rusalka*, a Servant in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Woglinde in the *Ring* cycle, and Garsenda in *Francesca da Rimini* (debut, 2013).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS On the operatic stage, she has sung the title role in the world premiere of Silvia Colasanti's *Prosperine* at Spoleto's Festival dei Due Mondi, the title role of *Lulu* in Rome, Cunegonde in *Candide* in concert with New Jersey's Colonial Symphony, and Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* at the Icelandic Opera. She has appeared in concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Youth Orchestra of the Americas, Princeton Symphony Orchestra, and at New York's Carnegie Hall and Merkin Concert Hall, Philadelphia's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and Los Angeles's Walt Disney Concert Hall, among others. She was a grand finalist in the Met's 2007 National Council Auditions and is featured in the documentary *The Audition*.



Richard Bernstein

BASS (BROOKLYN, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON Aye in *Akhnaten*, the Murderer in *Macbeth*, the Second Guard in *The Magic Flute*, the First Apprentice in *Wozzeck*, Pietro in *Simon Boccanegra*, and the Captain in *Manon Lescaut* at the Met.

MET APPEARANCES Since his 1995 debut as Zuniga in *Carmen*, he has sung nearly 450 performances of 33 roles, including Pistola in *Falstaff*, Bello in *La Fanciulla del West*, Angelotti in *Tosca*, Lord Krishna in Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, Colline in *La Bohème*, Orville Mason in the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy*, Abimélech in *Samson et Dalila*, Leporello and Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, Giacomo Balducci in *Benvenuto Cellini*, Marco in William Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge*, and Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Angelotti in *Tosca* in concert with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with New Jersey Choral Society, and Leporello at Chautauqua Opera. He has also appeared at Seattle Opera, Opera Philadelphia, the Dallas Opera, Central City Opera, Opera Pacific, Cincinnati's May Festival, Tanglewood Festival, Savonlinna Festival, Lincoln Center Festival, and with the New York Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, among many others.



Aaron Blake

TENOR (PALOS VERDES, CALIFORNIA)

THIS SEASON The High Priest of Amon in *Akhnaten* at the Met, Michel in Martinů's *Juliette* in Frankfurt, Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Israeli Opera and Cincinnati Opera, and concert appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

MET APPEARANCES Gastone in *La Traviata* (debut, 2017).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Lincoln Center Festival and Australia's Adelaide Festival and Perth Festival, Count Almaviva at Tulsa Opera, Mila in Andrea Clearfield's *Mila, Great Sorcerer* at the Prototype Festival, the title role of *Candide* with the Bangor Symphony Orchestra, Michel with the American Symphony Orchestra, and Alfredo in *La Traviata* at Wichita Grand Opera. He has also sung Tamino, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, and Pan in Cavalli's *La Calisto* at Cincinnati Opera; Tamino in Berlin, at Minnesota Opera, and on tour in Japan; Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Don Ottavio, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, and Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* at Utah Opera; Nadir in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* and Count Almaviva at Tulsa Opera; Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* at the Dallas Opera; and Sir Hervey in *Anna Bolena* at Washington National Opera.



Anthony Roth Costanzo

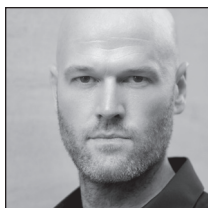
COUNTERTENOR (DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA)

THIS SEASON The title role of *Akhnaten* at the Met, Unulfo in *Rodelinda* at LA Opera and in concert in Vienna, Galatea in Handel's *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, and concert appearances at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., and with Les Violons du Roy and the English Concert.

MET APPEARANCES Ferdinand and Prospero in *The Enchanted Island*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, and Unulfo (debut, 2011).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has sung with leading opera companies across the United States and Europe, including the Glyndebourne Festival, English National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Canadian Opera Company, and Finnish National Opera. In 2018, he produced and starred in *Glass/Handel*, an operatic art installation co-presented by Opera Philadelphia and National Sawdust. A champion of new music, he appeared in the world premieres of Jimmy Lopez's *Bel Canto* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Jake Heggie's *Great Scott* at the Dallas Opera. He has also premiered works written for him by Matthew Aucoin, Paola Prestini, Gregory Spears, Suzanne Farrin, Bernard Rands, Scott Wheeler, Mohammed Fairouz, Steve Mackey, and Nico Muhly.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Zachary James

BASS-BARITONE (SPRING HILL, FLORIDA)

THIS SEASON Amenhotep III / the Professor in *Akhnaten* for his debut at the Met, the Cook in *The Love for Three Oranges* at Opera Philadelphia, Banquo in *Macbeth* at Milwaukee's Florentine Opera, Lucius in the world premiere of Paola Prestini's *Edward Tulane* at Minnesota Opera, and Jupiter in Rameau's *Platée* at Des Moines Metro Opera.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include the Doctor in *Wozzeck*, the Immigration Officer in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, Vodník in *Rusalka*, and Claggart in *Billy Budd* at Des Moines Metro Opera; the Four Villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at Nashville Opera; Amenhotep III at English National Opera and LA Opera; Frank Maurrant in Weill's *Street Scene* at Virginia Opera; Zaccaria in *Nabucco* at Union Avenue Opera; and Fafner in *Das Rheingold* at Arizona Opera. He has performed on Broadway as Lurch in *The Addams Family*, Hassinger in *South Pacific*, and in *Coram Boy*, and among his television credits are *30 Rock*, *Murphy Brown*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and PBS's *Great Performances*.



Will Liverman

BARITONE (VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA)

THIS SEASON Horemhab in *Akhnaten* and Papageno in *The Magic Flute* at the Met, Pantalone in *The Love for Three Oranges* at Opera Philadelphia, Silvio in *Pagliacci* at Opera Colorado and Portland Opera, Marcello in *La Bohème* at Seattle Opera, Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra.

MET APPEARANCES Malcolm Fleet in Nico Muhly's *Marnie* (debut, 2018).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Stárek in *Jenůfa* and Schaunard in *La Bohème* at the Santa Fe Opera, Schaunard at Opera Philadelphia and the Dallas Opera, the Pilot in Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince* at Tulsa Opera, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* at Central City Opera and Milwaukee's Florentine Opera, Tommy McIntyre in Gregory Spears's *Fellow Travelers* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Kentucky Opera, Seattle Opera, Virginia Opera, Madison Opera, and Utah Opera. He originated the role of Dizzy Gillespie in Daniel Schnyder's *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* at Opera Philadelphia, a role which he also sang at English National Opera, New York's Apollo Theater, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Madison Opera.