

GIACOMO PUCCINI

TURANDOT

CONDUCTOR
Paolo Carignani

PRODUCTION
Franco Zeffirelli

SET DESIGNER
Franco Zeffirelli

COSTUME DESIGNERS
Anna Anni
AND
Dada Saligeri

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Gil Wechsler

CHOREOGRAPHER
Chiang Ching

STAGE DIRECTOR
David Kneuss

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR
James Levine

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR
Fabio Luisi

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and
Renato Simoni

Monday, January 11, 2016
7:30-10:45PM

The production of *Turandot* is made
possible by a generous gift from
Mrs. Donald D. Harrington

The revival of this production was made possible
by a gift from the Betsy and Edward Cohen/
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The Metropolitan Opera

2015–16 SEASON

The 307th Metropolitan Opera performance of

GIACOMO PUCCINI'S

TURANDOT

CONDUCTOR

Paolo Carignani

TURANDOT

Nina Stemme

LIÙ

Anita Hartig

CALÀF

Marco Berti

TIMUR

Alexander Tsymbalyuk

EMPEROR ALTOUM

Ronald Naldi

PING

Dwayne Croft*

PANG

Tony Stevenson*

PONG

Eduardo Valdes

THREE MASKS

Elliott Reiland

Andrew Robinson

Amir Levy

MANDARIN

David Crawford

EXECUTIONER

Arthur Lazalde

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Sasha Semin

HANDMAIDENS

Anne Nonnemacher

Mary Hughes

TEMPTRESSES

Jennifer Cadden

Oriada Islami Prifti

Rachel Schuette

Sarah Weber-Gallo

Monday, January 11, 2016, 7:30–10:45PM



A scene from
Puccini's *Turandot*

Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**
 Musical Preparation **Thomas Bagwell, Carol Isaac,**
Steven Osgood, and Bryan Wagorn
 Assistant Stage Directors **J. Knighten Smit and Paula Suozzi**
 Stage Band Conductor **Gregory Buchalter**
 Italian Coach **Gildo Di Nunzio**
 Prompter **Carol Isaac**
 Children's Chorus Director **Anthony Piccolo**
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Diana Damrau as Lella

PHOTO: KRISTIAN SCHÜLLER/METROPOLITAN OPERA

Synopsis

Act I

Outside the Imperial Palace in Peking

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 8:05 PM)

Act II

SCENE 1 The apartments of Ping, Pang, and Pong

SCENE 2 Before the emperor's throne

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 9:35 PM)

Act III

SCENE 1 The Imperial Gardens

SCENE 2 Before the emperor's throne

Act I

A mandarin reads an edict to the crowd: any prince seeking to marry Princess Turandot must answer three riddles. If he fails, he will die. The most recent suitor, the Prince of Persia, is to be executed at the moon's rising. Among the onlookers are the slave girl Liù, her aged master, and the young Calàf, who recognizes the old man as his long-lost father, Timur, vanquished King of Tartary. Only Liù has remained faithful to him, and when Calàf asks her why she replies that once, long ago, Calàf smiled at her. The mob cries for blood but greets the rising moon with a sudden fearful silence. When the Prince of Persia is led to his execution, the crowd calls upon the princess to spare him. Turandot appears and wordlessly orders the execution to proceed. Transfixed by the beauty of the unattainable princess, Calàf decides to win her, to the horror of Liù and Timur. Turandot's three ministers, Ping, Pang, and Pong, also try to discourage him, but Calàf is unmoved. He comforts Liù, then strikes the gong that announces a new suitor.

Act II

Ping, Pang, and Pong lament Turandot's bloody reign, hoping that love will conquer her and restore peace. Their thoughts wander to their peaceful country homes, but the noise of the crowd gathering to witness the riddle challenge calls them back to reality.

Before the assembled court, the old emperor asks Calàf to reconsider, but he will not be dissuaded. Turandot appears. She recounts the story of her beautiful ancestor, Princess Lou-Ling, who was abducted and killed by a conquering prince. In revenge, she has turned against men and determined that none shall ever possess her. She poses her first question to Calàf: What is born each night

and dies each dawn? "Hope," Calàf answers, correctly. Turandot continues: What flickers red and warm like a flame, yet is not a flame? "Blood," Calàf replies after a moment's thought. Shaken, Turandot delivers the third riddle: What is like ice but burns? Tense silence prevails until Calàf triumphantly cries, "Turandot!" The crowd erupts in joy, and the princess vainly begs her father not to give her to the stranger. Hoping to win her love, Calàf offers Turandot a challenge of his own: if she can learn his name by dawn, he will forfeit his life.

Act III

At night in the Imperial Gardens, Calàf hears a proclamation: on pain of death no one in Peking shall sleep until Turandot learns the stranger's name. Calàf is certain of his victory, but Ping, Pang, and Pong try to bribe him to leave the city. As the fearful mob threatens him to learn his name, soldiers drag in Liù and Timur. Calàf tries to convince the crowd that neither of them knows his secret. When Turandot appears, commanding Timur to speak, Liù replies that she alone knows the stranger's identity and will never reveal it. She is tortured but remains silent. Impressed by her fortitude, Turandot asks Liù's secret. It is love, she replies. When the soldiers intensify the torture, Liù tells Turandot that she, too, will know the joys of love. Then she snatches a dagger and kills herself. The crowd forms a funeral procession and the body is taken away. Turandot remains alone to confront Calàf, who impetuously kisses her. Knowing emotion for the first time, Turandot weeps. Calàf, now sure of winning her, reveals his identity.

Once again before the emperor's throne, Turandot declares she knows the stranger's name: it is Love.

Giacomo Puccini

Turandot

Premiere: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 1926

Puccini's final opera is a huge and melodious fairy tale set in a China of legend. It has its roots in various folk tales about a princess who tests the worthiness of her suitors by posing a series of riddles and who has those who answer incorrectly killed. Puccini's art soars in this most unusual score, which features an astounding and innovative use of chorus and orchestra that stands with any achievement in opera. Yet for all this, *Turandot* is recognizably Puccini, bursting with the instantly appealing melodies that are at the core of his universal popularity. The characters of Ping, Pang, and Pong are descended from the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte* that influenced much of the opera and drama of the 20th century. The unenviable task of completing *Turandot's* final scene upon Puccini's sudden death was left to the composer Franco Alfano. Conductor Arturo Toscanini oversaw Alfano's contribution and led the world premiere. The opening night performance omitted the Alfano finale, with Toscanini ending the opera where Puccini had abandoned the score when he died.

The Creators

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) was immensely popular in his own lifetime, and his mature works remain staples in the repertory of most of the world's opera companies. Franco Alfano (1875–1954) was recommended by Arturo Toscanini to complete *Turandot* based on the success of his 1921 opera *La Leggenda di Sakùntala*. His works are rarely performed today, though *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1936) was seen at the Met in 2005. The librettists for *Turandot* were the playwright and journalist Giuseppe Adami (1878–1946), who had previously worked with Puccini on *Il Tabarro* and *La Rondine*, and Renato Simoni (1875–1952), who had written librettos for other composers. The source of the story was the play *Turandot* by the Venetian playwright Carlo Gozzi (1720–1806). Gozzi wrote satirical fantasies and later tragedies for the Venetian stage at a time of intense debate about the relative merits of realism and fantasy in dramatic art.

The Setting

Gozzi's play used the *commedia dell'arte* characters in their original form. In his play they wandered from Italy to China and were members of the Imperial court. Their comments satirized Venetian politics and mores of the times. Puccini and his librettists dispensed with any such relevance. The China of this opera, set in

“legendary times,” is a mythical neverland where the clash of the sexes is drawn in high relief.

The Music

The large *Turandot* orchestra calls for a wide variety of instruments, including alto saxophones, celesta, bass xylophone, harps (originally designated to be muffled with pieces of paper between the strings), and an organ. Puccini uses the chorus to great effect, from the bloodthirsty rabble urging on the executioner in Act I to the sublime invocation to the moon immediately following. There are several genuine Chinese themes used in *Turandot* that are integrated into the score in a suave and brilliantly original manner. The big imperial anthem in Act II is based on a Chinese melody, but the orchestra plays harmonies derived from ancient European religious music and the remarkable resulting sound is not specific to any single culture. *Turandot*’s show-stopping Act II aria, “In questa reggia,” and her succeeding confrontation with Calàf create an effect of Wagnerian proportions while still remaining in a firmly Italian style. The opera also contains moments of sheer melodic beauty in Puccini’s most lyrical vein, notably in Liù’s plaintive aria from Act I, “Signore, ascolta,” and the tenor’s unforgettable song of triumph, “Nessun dorma!,” which opens Act III.

Met History

The Met gave the United States premiere of *Turandot* in 1926, shortly after the world premiere in Milan. Tullio Serafin conducted a cast featuring one of Puccini’s favorite sopranos in the title role, Maria Jeritza, paired with Giacomo Lauri-Volpi as Calàf. This impressive duo led most of the subsequent revivals through the 1929–30 season, after which the opera (which had been considered an unusual stylistic departure for Puccini) disappeared from the Met stage for several decades. It returned with the legendary 1961 production designed by Cecil Beaton featuring conductor Leopold Stokowski in his company debut and starring Birgit Nilsson, Franco Corelli, and Anna Moffo. The current production by Franco Zeffirelli had its premiere in 1987 with James Levine conducting Eva Marton, Plácido Domingo, and Leona Mitchell. Other artists who have since taken on the leading roles include Gwyneth Jones, Jane Eaglen, and Maria Guleghina (*Turandot*); Aprile Millo, Teresa Stratas, Ruth Ann Swenson, and Angela Gheorghiu (Liù); and Luciano Pavarotti, Johan Botha, Salvatore Licitra, and Marcello Giordani (Calàf).

Program Note

One summer day in 1920, Giacomo Puccini had lunch in Milan with a 45-year-old playwright and critic, Renato Simoni. Puccini was between operas, and his search for a libretto—a virtually constant element in his creative life—was becoming desperate. Somehow the conversation turned to the 18th-century Venetian writer Carlo Gozzi and his fanciful play *Turandot*, a fairy tale set in an invented Orient. Perhaps, as he discussed details of the story with the younger man, Puccini was reminded of an earlier opera, *Turanda*, written by his onetime professor at the Milan Conservatory, Antonio Bazzini, and presented at La Scala in 1867. Or he and Simoni may have talked about a more recent Max Reinhardt production of the Schiller adaptation of Gozzi; it had enjoyed a huge success in Berlin. In fact, when Simoni later sent the text to the composer, it was the Schiller version translated into Italian by Andrea Maffei in the mid-19th century. The composer read it and was convinced.

As always with Puccini, the choice of a libretto did not mean calm sailing toward his objective. He was at times assailed by doubts; he frequently badgered his collaborators (Simoni had been joined by the experienced Giuseppe Adami, librettist of *La Rondine* and *Suor Angelica*) for more words, but then, as he received the text, he demanded changes, cuts, and extensions. This tormented process went on for two years. Finally, on June 25, 1922, the composer could write to his publisher: “Propitious days for me.... Simoni and Adami have delivered to me the libretto of *Turandot*, finished to my complete satisfaction.” This did not mean there were no further changes, but the work of composition could go forward. By February 24, 1924, Puccini had completely orchestrated the first two acts; for the third, he was dissatisfied with the words of the final love duet, the culminating scene of the whole opera. The long-suffering librettists were set to work again. On March 13, Puccini wrote to his friend Sybil Seligman in London: “Adami is here to finish the libretto—the last duet, which has come out very well indeed.”

But the same letter says, ominously: “I have not been at all well and I’ve still got a sore throat and an obstinate cough.” Over the next months in Puccini’s letters, complaints about a sore throat alternate with complaints about the difficulty of completing *Turandot*’s last act. The pain and discomfort finally became so great that Puccini consulted a specialist, who advised an operation at once. Puccini’s son was told the truth: the composer had an advanced cancer of the throat. Puccini himself and his wife were kept in ignorance of the real nature of his illness.

At the beginning of November, Puccini was about to set off for Brussels, where the operation was to be performed. Arturo Toscanini, who was scheduled to conduct the premiere of *Turandot* at La Scala, was in Bologna preparing a production of Boito’s *Nerone*. With him was the director Giovacchino Forzano, a friend and librettist of Puccini’s and his neighbor in Viareggio. Forzano’s wife

telephoned to tell him of the imminent journey of the composer. Forzano and Toscanini went at once to visit Puccini, as the director recalls in his memoirs:

The next morning, with my car, Toscanini and I reached Viareggio. Puccini was expecting us. Toscanini's visits cheered him. He thanked him, and was happy that Toscanini had taken his Chinese creature to heart. He showed him the whole score of *Turandot*; only a little was lacking to complete it. Once he was back from Brussels he would finish the opera quickly, and he played many passages for us. Unaware of the seriousness of his illness, he joked about the change in his voice. "You hear my tenor's voice, Arturo?" and, still joking, he vocalized.... We went back to Bologna. We didn't exchange a word during the whole journey. This was on November 3, 1924.

The next day, when Puccini got into the Brussels train, he was carrying in his suitcase 36 sheets of music paper, all scrawled over with notes: his sketches for the final duet. There are false starts, jotted themes, melodies to be developed, and cryptic messages to himself: "find melody," "less silly than the other," and—most puzzling—"then Tristan."

The treatment was, it seemed, a success. But suddenly, on November 28, Puccini had a heart attack, and he died the following day. There was a funeral service in Brussels, and another in the Milan cathedral, where Toscanini conducted. Then there was the impelling question: what to do with *Turandot*? After considering other solutions, Toscanini turned to Franco Alfano, a successful composer of operas in his own right. The Italian critic Teodoro Celli wrote, some years ago, of Puccini's sketches: "An examination of the material...can inspire in us only admiration for what Alfano managed to achieve, not only with an expert's great mastery, but also with extreme respect and loyalty towards Puccini's intentions."

On the night of *Turandot's* posthumous premiere, April 25, 1926 (with Rosa Raisa in the title role, Miguel Fleta as Calàf, and Maria Zamboni as Liù), the audience at La Scala was unable to admire Alfano's work. Close to the end of Act III, after the chorus lamented the death of Liù, Toscanini set down his baton and turned to the house, saying, more or less (he has been variously quoted): "Here the opera ends, because at this point the maestro died." At subsequent performances the Alfano ending was performed, but—at Toscanini's insistence—heavily cut. In recent years the full Alfano edition has been revived, but its length—however accomplished musically—seems to chill the drama and the finale, and Toscanini's abbreviated version remains more popular and practical.

—William Weaver

The Cast



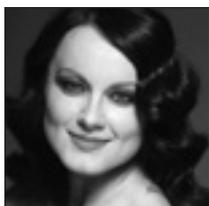
Paolo Carignani

CONDUCTOR (MILAN, ITALY)

THIS SEASON *Turandot*, *Tosca*, and *La Bohème* at the Met, *Norma* at Munich's Bavarian State Opera, and *Carmen* with the Canadian Opera Company.

MET APPEARANCES *Nabucco*, *Aida*, and *La Traviata* (debut, 2008).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS From 1999 to 2008 he was general music director at Oper Frankfurt, where he conducted *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Luisa Miller*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and *Tristan und Isolde*, among other works. Recent performances include *Il Trovatore*, *Nabucco*, *Macbeth*, *La Traviata*, and *Nabucco* at Munich's Bavarian State Opera, *Turandot* at the Bregenz Festival, *Guillaume Tell* at the Netherlands Opera, *Nabucco* in Tokyo, *La Fanciulla del West* at the Vienna State Opera, and Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* in Strasbourg. He has also conducted at the Staatsoper Berlin, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Barcelona's Liceu, and at festivals in Glyndebourne, Spoleto, Schleswig-Holstein, and Pesaro.



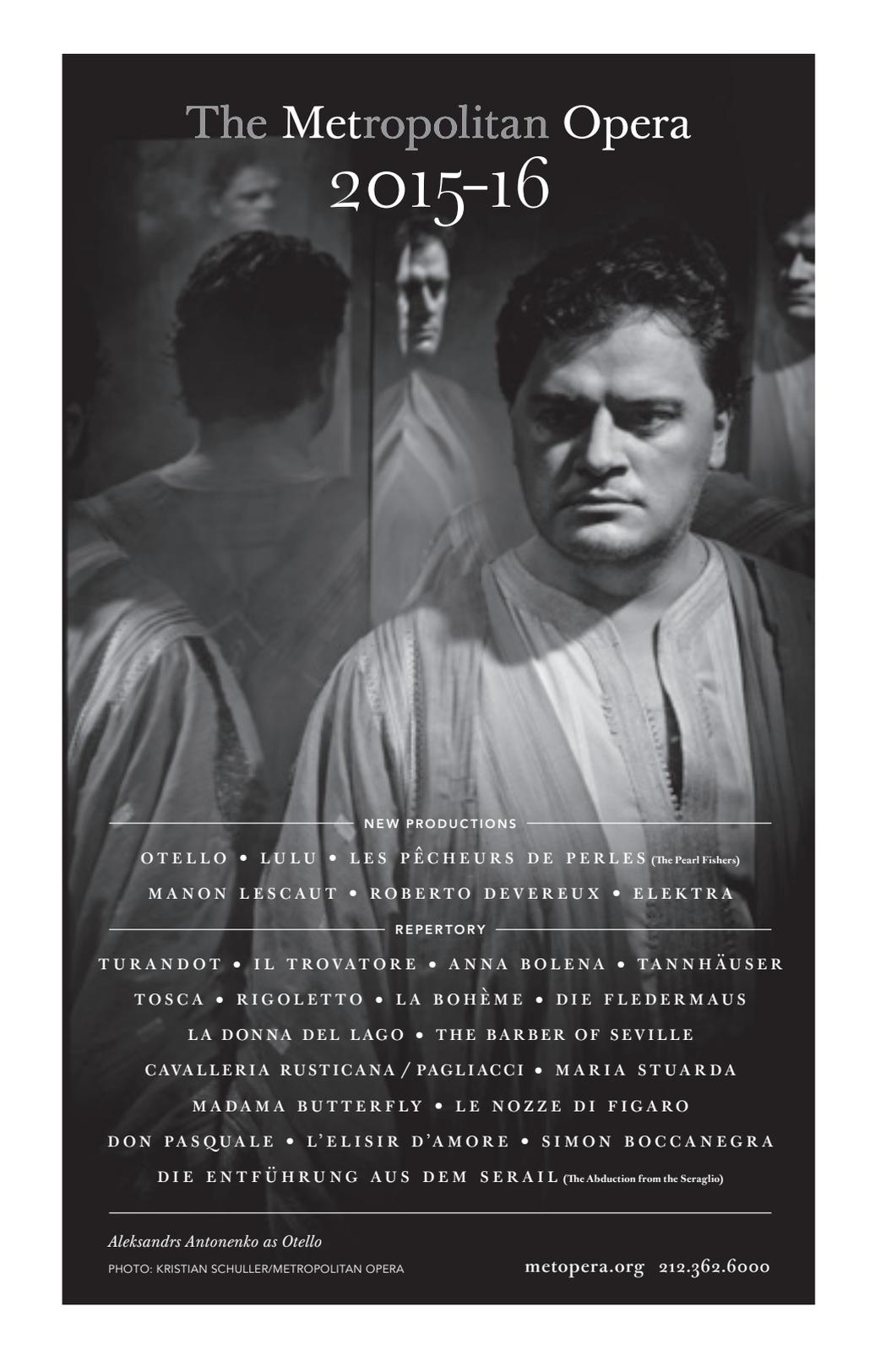
Anita Hartig

SOPRANO (BISTRITA, ROMANIA)

THIS SEASON Liù in *Turandot* and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Met, Liù at the Vienna State Opera, and Marguerite in *Faust* at the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse.

MET APPEARANCES Micaëla in *Carmen* and Mimi in *La Bohème* (debut, 2014).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Her roles with the Vienna State Opera include Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Mimi and Musetta in *La Bohème*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Susanna, and Micaëla. She has also sung Violetta in *La Traviata* and Giulietta in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* with the Zurich Opera, Liù for her 2014 debut at the Bavarian State Opera, and Mimi at Brussels's La Monnaie, La Scala, Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Paris Opera.



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Aleksandrs Antonenko as Otello

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Nina Stemme

SOPRANO (STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN)

THIS SEASON The title roles of *Turandot* and *Elektra* at the Met, Alicia Hauser in the world premiere of Hans Gefors's *Notorious* in Göteborg, *Elektra* with the Vienna State Opera, *Turandot* in Zurich and with Munich's Bavarian State Opera, *Brünnhilde* in *Die Walküre* with the Semperoper Dresden, *Brünnhilde* in the full *Ring* cycle with Washington National Opera, and *Isolde* in *Tristan und Isolde* and *Elektra* with the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

MET APPEARANCES *Ariadne* in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Senta* in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (debut, 2000).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS The title role of *Aida* and her first *Isolde* at the Glyndebourne Festival, *Isolde* at the Bayreuth Festival, and *Salome* for her debut at Barcelona's Liceu. She has also appeared at the festivals of Salzburg, Savonlinna, Lucerne, and Bregenz, and at La Scala, Paris's Bastille Opera, Covent Garden, San Francisco Opera, Stockholm's Royal Opera, and the Teatro San Carlo in Naples.



Marco Berti

TENOR (COMO, ITALY)

THIS SEASON *Calaf* in *Turandot* at the Met, *Canio* in *Pagliacci* at the Los Angeles Opera, *Radamès* in *Aida* in Turin, *Pollione* in *Norma* at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *Giannetto* in *Giordano's La Cena delle Beffe* at La Scala, and *Don Alvaro* in *La Forza del Destino* in Genoa.

MET APPEARANCES *Calaf* in *Turandot*, *Manrico* in *Il Trovatore*, *Pinkerton* in *Madama Butterfly* (debut, 2004), *Don José* in *Carmen*, *Cavaradossi* in Act II of *Tosca* for the opening of the 2005-06 season, and *Radamès*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS In recent seasons he has sung *Radamès* at the Arena di Verona, *Pollione* in Zurich and with the San Francisco Opera, *Cavaradossi* with the Paris Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, *Manrico* in Naples, the title role of *Otello* in Bilbao, and *Canio* at La Scala. He has also sung *Cavaradossi* with the Los Angeles Opera, *Manrico* with the Houston Grand Opera, *Calaf* and *Cavaradossi* in Munich, and *Calaf* with the San Francisco Opera.

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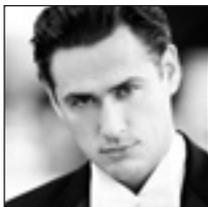
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Alexander Tsymbalyuk

BASS-BARITONE (ODESSA, UKRAINE)

THIS SEASON Timur in *Turandot* at the Met, the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* and King René in *Iolanta* at the Paris Opera, and the title role of *Boris Godunov*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, and Doctor Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Munich's Bavarian State Opera.

MET APPEARANCES Lodovico in *Otello* and Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* (debut, 2010).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has recently sung Timur at La Scala, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at La Scala and at the Bavarian State Opera, Sparafucile at Covent Garden and Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, and Don Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Hamburg. He has also sung Bedyay in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* at Barcelona's Liceu, Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and the King in *Aida* at La Scala, Boris Godunov at the Bolshoi Theatre, the Friar in *Don Carlo* at Florence's Maggio Musicale, and Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and Siegfried and Hunding in the *Ring* cycle in Hamburg.

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