

Giuseppe Verdi

Falstaff

CONDUCTOR

James Levine

PRODUCTION

Robert Carsen

SET DESIGNER

Paul Steinberg

COSTUME DESIGNER

Brigitte Reiffenstuel

LIGHTING DESIGNERS

**Robert Carsen
Peter Van Praet**

GENERAL MANAGER

Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR

James Levine

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

Fabio Luisi

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Arrigo Boito, based on the plays
The Merry Wives of Windsor and *Henry IV*
by William Shakespeare

Saturday, December 14, 2013, 1:00–3:50 pm

New Production

The production of *Falstaff* was made possible by generous gifts from the Betsy and Ed Cohen/Areté Foundation Fund for New Productions & Revivals, and Harry and Misook Doolittle

Additional funding was received from The Gilbert S. Kahn & John J. Noffo Kahn Foundation, and Mr. and Mrs. William R. Miller

A co-production of the Metropolitan Opera; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Teatro alla Scala, Milan; the Canadian Opera Company, Toronto; and De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam

The Metropolitan Opera

2013–14 Season

The 178th Metropolitan Opera performance of

Giuseppe Verdi's

Falstaff

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This performance is also being broadcast live on Metropolitan Opera Radio on SiriusXM channel 74.

Conductor
James Levine

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Dr. Caius
Carlo Bosi

Fenton
Paolo Fanale

Sir John Falstaff
Ambrogio Maestri

Ford
Franco Vassallo

Bardolfo
Keith Jameson

Pistola
Christian Van Horn

Meg Page
Jennifer Johnson Cano*

Alice Ford
Angela Meade

Mistress Quickly
Stephanie Blythe*

Nannetta
Lisette Oropesa*

Saturday, December 14, 2013, 1:00–3:50 pm

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KEN HORN/MPH/CHOUTAN OPERA

Stephanie Blythe as Mistress Quickly and Ambrogio Maestri in the title role of Verdi's *Falstaff*

Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**
Assistant to the Costume Designer **Zeb Lalljee**
Musical Preparation **Jane Klaviter, John Keenan, Carrie-Ann Matheson, Jonathan Kelly, and Bryan Wagorn**
Assistant Stage Directors **Daniel Dooner, Gina Lapinski, and Louisa Muller**

Prompter **Jane Klaviter**
Met Titles **Sonya Haddad**
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2013-14 SEASON

Mariusz Kwiecien and Anna Netrebko
in *Eugene Onegin*

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Synopsis

The action takes place in and around Royal Windsor, England, during the reign of Elizabeth II

Act I

SCENE 1 Falstaff's lodging at the Garter Inn

Pause

SCENE 2 A room at the Garter Inn

Pause

Act II

SCENE 1 Another room at the Garter Inn

Pause

SCENE 2 At Ford's house

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 2:35 PM)

Act III

SCENE 1 Outside the Garter Inn

SCENE 2 Windsor Great Park

Act I

Dr. Caius bursts into Sir John Falstaff's room in the Garter Inn, accusing him of unseemly behavior the previous night. He further accuses Falstaff's two henchmen, Bardolfo and Pistola, of having robbed him while he was drunk. Unable to obtain reparations, Dr. Caius leaves in a fury. Falstaff contemplates the large bill he has run up at the inn. He informs Bardolfo and Pistola that in order to repair his finances he plans to seduce Alice Ford and Meg Page, both wives of prosperous Windsor citizens. When Bardolfo and Pistola refuse to deliver the letters Falstaff has written to the two ladies, Falstaff instructs a page to do so instead. He then ridicules Bardolfo and Pistola's newly discovered sense of honor, before throwing them both out of his room.

Alice Ford and Meg Page laugh over the identical love letters they have received from Sir John Falstaff. They share their amusement with Alice's daughter Nannetta, and with their friend Mistress Quickly. Ford arrives, followed by four men all proffering advice: Dr. Caius, whom Ford favors as Nannetta's future husband; Bardolfo and Pistola, who are now seeking advantageous employment from Ford; and Fenton, who is in love with Ford's daughter Nannetta. When Ford learns of Falstaff's plan to seduce his wife, he immediately becomes jealous. While Alice and Meg plan how to take revenge on their importunate suitor,

Ford decides to disguise himself in order to pay a visit to Falstaff. Unnoticed in the midst of all the commotion, Nannetta and Fenton manage to steal a few precious moments together.

Act II

Feigning penitence, Bardolfo and Pistola rejoin Falstaff's service. They show in Mistress Quickly, who informs Falstaff that both Alice and Meg are madly in love with him. She explains that it will be easier to seduce Alice, since her husband is out of the house every afternoon, between two and three. Falstaff joyously anticipates his seduction of Alice. Bardolfo now announces that a "Mister Fontana" (Ford in disguise) wishes to speak to Falstaff. To Falstaff's surprise, "Fontana" offers him wine and money if he will seduce Alice Ford, explaining that he has long been in love with the lady, but to no avail. If she were to be seduced by the more experienced Falstaff, she might then be more likely to fall a second time and accept "Fontana." Falstaff agrees to the plan, telling his surprised new friend that he already has a rendezvous with Alice that very afternoon. As Falstaff leaves to prepare himself, Ford gives way to jealous rage. When Falstaff returns, dressed in his best clothes, the two men exchange compliments before leaving together.

Mistress Quickly, Alice and Meg are preparing for Falstaff's visit. Nannetta tearfully tells her mother that her father insists on her marrying Dr. Caius, but Alice tells her daughter not to worry. Falstaff arrives and begins his seduction of Alice, nostalgically boasting of his aristocratic youth as page to the Duke of Norfolk. As Falstaff becomes more amorous, Meg Page interrupts the tête-à-tête, as planned, to announce (in jest) that Ford is approaching. But just at that point Mistress Quickly suddenly returns in a panic to inform Alice that Ford really is on his way, and in a jealous temper. As Ford rushes in with a group of townsfolk, the terrified Falstaff seeks a hiding place, eventually ending up in a large laundry basket. Fenton and Nannetta also hide. Ford and the other men ransack the house. Hearing the sound of kissing, Ford is convinced that he has found his wife and her lover Falstaff together, but is furious to discover Nannetta and Fenton instead. While Ford argues with Fenton, Alice instructs her servants to empty the laundry basket out of the window. To general hilarity, Falstaff is thrown into the River Thames.

Act III

A wet and bruised Falstaff laments the wickedness of the world, but soon cheers up with a glass of mulled wine. Mistress Quickly persuades him that Alice was innocent of the unfortunate incident at Ford's house. To prove that Alice still loves him, she proposes a new rendezvous that night in Windsor Great Park. In

a letter that Quickly gives to Falstaff, Alice asks the knight to appear at midnight, disguised as the Black Huntsman. Ford, Nannetta, Meg, and Alice prepare the second part of their plot: Nannetta will be Queen of the Fairies and the others, also in disguise, will help to continue Falstaff's punishment. Ford secretly promises Caius that he will marry Nannetta that evening. Mistress Quickly overhears them.

As Fenton and Nannetta are reunited, Alice explains her plan to trick Ford into marrying them. They all hide as Falstaff approaches. On the stroke of midnight, Alice appears. She declares her love for Falstaff, but suddenly runs away, saying that she hears spirits approaching. Nannetta, disguised as the Queen of the Fairies, summons her followers who attack the terrified Falstaff, pinching and poking him until he promises to give up his dissolute ways. In the midst of the assault Falstaff suddenly recognizes Bardolfo, and realizes that he has been tricked. While Ford explains that he was "Fontana," Quickly scolds Falstaff for his attempts at seducing two younger, virtuous women. Falstaff accepts that he has been made a figure of fun, but points out that he remains the true source of wit in others. Dr. Caius now comes forward with a figure in white. They are to be married by Ford. Alice brings forward another couple, who also receive Ford's blessing. When the brides remove their veils it is revealed that Ford has just married Dr. Caius to Bardolfo, and more importantly Fenton to Nannetta! With everyone now laughing at his expense, Ford has no choice but to forgive the lovers and bless their marriage. Before sitting down to a wedding supper with Sir John Falstaff, the entire company agrees that the whole world may be nothing but a jest filled with jesters, but he who laughs last, laughs best.

—*Robert Carsen*

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Giuseppe Verdi

Falstaff

Premiere: La Scala, Milan, 1893

A deeply human comedy full of humor and genuine emotion, Verdi's last opera is a splendid finale to an unparalleled career in the theater. The story is an amalgamation of scenes from Shakespeare, primarily drawn from the comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It centers on the remarkable personality of Sir John Falstaff, one of literature's most compelling characters: aging, vain, dishonest, a bit crass, prodigiously self-indulgent with food and drink, but also curiously philosophical. Falstaff had previously appeared in the two parts of the history play *Henry IV*, where he provided comic relief as well as commentary on the weighty proceedings from the point of view of an everyman. Verdi's opera includes brief passages and references from the histories, woven together by Arrigo Boito (the composer's collaborator on his previous opera, *Otello*) into a libretto that is a dramatic masterpiece in itself. The subject choice of a comedy based on Shakespeare was surprising for Verdi: while there are comic moments in several of his great tragedies (most notably *La Forza del Destino*), his only real comic opera had been *Un Giorno di Regno*, his second work for the stage and an utter failure more than 50 years earlier. *Falstaff's* supremely well-crafted score, which has long commanded the respect even of Verdi's critics, shows that the composer was continuing to grow as an artist even as he entered the ninth decade of his life. It is an astounding work and among the greatest operatic comedies of all time.

The Creators

In a remarkable career spanning six decades, Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) composed 28 operas, at least half of which are at the core of today's repertoire. *Falstaff* was his final work for the stage. Verdi's role in Italy's cultural and political development has made him an icon in his native country. The remarkable Arrigo Boito (1842–1918) was also a composer (his opera *Mefistofele*, based on Goethe's *Faust*, premiered in 1868), as well as a journalist and critic. The plays of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) have inspired a huge number of operatic interpretations. Before *Falstaff*, Verdi had already adapted *Macbeth* (1847, revised 1865) and *Otello* (1887, also with Boito as librettist).

The Setting

The opera is set in and around the town of Windsor, west of London. The historical references in Shakespeare's plays place the character of Sir John

Falstaff in the first decades of the 15th century, although traditionally the opera has often been set in Shakespeare's time, two centuries later. The current Met production places the action in mid-20th century England, after the Second World War—an era when long-established social norms were rapidly changing and the aristocracy lost much of their wealth and influence.

The Music

Falstaff marks a stylistic departure for Verdi and occupies a category of its own, without parallels in the history of the genre. The musical ideas come fast and abundantly, moving from one to the next organically and without discernible breaks. The text is of primary importance, well beyond creating opportunities for lyric set pieces of solos, ensembles, and choruses. Much of this could be said for other operas, especially those written after Verdi. What makes *Falstaff* unique is the abundance of lyricism within such an unusual format that almost completely avoids traditional arias. The orchestra carries the story and occasionally makes literal comments on the action (the jingling of coins—piccolos and triangles—in Act II; the delights of hot wine warming the drenched body—solo flute to violins to full orchestra—in Act III). At other times, it represents the overall spirit of the proceedings, such as in the remarkable prelude to Act III, which contains all the sweeping crescendo of a Rossini overture in less than a minute. Several brief but notable vocal solos stand out, among them Falstaff's playfully comic recollection of his youth in Act II and his melancholy soliloquy on aging in Act III, as well as Fenton's serenade in the last scene. But the bulk of the singing happens in ensembles that, despite their highly sophisticated musical structure, seem as natural as speech and adhere perfectly to the lines of the text. The complex counter-rhythms of the ensemble that ends Act I are both funny and the perfect depiction of people at cross-purposes. The opera's celebrated finale is a fugue in which all the characters take part, each one both a perpetrator, and the butt, of the "great joke of life" Falstaff evokes in his final words.

Falstaff at the Met

Falstaff came to the Met two years after its world premiere, with French baritone Victor Maurel reprising his performance of the title role and American soprano Emma Eames as Alice. It was repeated the following year and then retired until Arturo Toscanini conducted a new production in 1909 that starred Antonio Scotti and Emmy Destinn. This production, too, was repeated the subsequent season and then forgotten. The opera returned in 1925 in another new production, designed by Joseph Urban, conducted by Tullio Serafin, and again starring Scotti opposite Lucrezia Bori as Alice and Beniamino Gigli as Fenton. The breakout performance of the night was American baritone Lawrence Tibbett's Ford, whose Act II solo elicited a roaring ovation from the audience that was

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VERDI

Falstaff

DEC 9, 14 mat, 18, 21 mat, 27, 30 JAN 3, 6, 11

Music Director James Levine conducts Verdi's comic masterpiece in Robert Carsen's acclaimed new production, with Ambrogio Maestri in the title role.

TCHAIKOVSKY

Eugene Onegin

DEC 12

Marina Poplavskaya, Rolando Villazón, and Peter Mattei star in Deborah Warner's new production of Tchaikovsky's fateful romance.

PUCCINI

Tosca

DEC 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 28 mat

Following her triumph in *Norma*, Sondra Radvanovsky stars in the title role of Puccini's fast-moving operatic thriller, opposite Marcello Giordani as Cavaradossi.

R. STRAUSS

Der Rosenkavalier

DEC 10, 13

Martina Serafin and Peter Rose star in Strauss's comic masterpiece, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the opera's U.S. premiere. Daniela Sindram and Géraldine Chauvet share the role of Octavian.

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enthusiastically reported on the front page of the *New York Times*. Tibbett took the title role when the opera was staged again in 1938–39, with Ettore Panizza on the podium, and in 1944, with Thomas Beecham conducting. Leonard Warren was Falstaff for three performances in 1949, led by Fritz Reiner, after which the work again fell out of the repertoire. It returned in 1964 in a production directed and designed by Franco Zeffirelli and conducted by Leonard Bernstein, both in their Met debuts. The cast included Gabriella Tucci, Regina Resnik, Rosalind Elias, Judith Raskin, Anselmo Colzani, Mario Sereni, Luigi Alva, Paul Franke, Andrea Velis, and Norman Scott. This staging remained in the Met repertoire until 2005, with James Levine conducting 55 performances beginning in 1972. Among the artists who appeared in it are Geraint Evans, Pilar Lorengar, Tito Gobbi, Renata Tebaldi, Cornell MacNeil, Giuseppe Taddei, Mirella Freni, Marilyn Horne, Paul Plishka, Stephanie Bythe, Bryn Terfel, Patricia Racette, and Matthew Polenzani.

Program Note

“The great dream has come true,” wrote Arrigo Boito, the librettist of Verdi’s *Otello* and *Falstaff*, shortly before the former opera was unveiled in 1887. *Otello*’s premiere was an internationally celebrated success, bringing to fruition a proposal that had started eight years earlier when it was tentatively broached over the course of a dinner conversation. Boito refers to Verdi’s dream of creating a new opera based on his beloved Shakespeare, but he might just as well have marveled at the feat of luring the aging composer out of his self-proclaimed retirement from the opera stage. *Otello* didn’t just represent a late-career comeback: it marked the summit of Verdi’s achievement as the greatest of Italy’s operatic tragedians.

Verdi had become so identified with the tragic genre that *Otello* must have seemed the perfect culmination of his life’s work. Yet Boito was determined, as he put it in a letter to a friend, “to make that bronze colossus resound one more time.” Verdi, for his part, had long harbored a desire to prove that the scope of his art extended beyond the dramas of gloomy passion with which he had built his reputation.

As early as 1847 Rossini made a pronouncement that still caused Verdi to bristle decades later: “He will never write a semi-serious opera... much less a comic opera like *L’Elisir d’Amore*.” Undoubtedly this reminded Verdi of the humiliating fiasco of his only previous attempt at comedy—*Un Giorno di Regno*, his second opera—but he must have also been spurred by an itch to compete with his illustrious predecessor, whose *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* Verdi deemed “the best comic opera ever written,” a work filled with a “wealth of real musical ideas, comic verve, and truth of declamation.”

Shakespeare himself, Verdi’s abiding idol, commanded admiration for the all-encompassing spectrum of a body of work that not only probes the deepest tragedy but also teems with comic vitality. Pioneering Romantics like Victor Hugo—another major influence on Verdi—even reappraised the Bard as one of their own on the grounds of his virtuosity at juggling the sublime and the grotesque within the same play. Verdi had already ventured into similar territory with the decadent festivities surrounding the grim plots of *Rigoletto* and *Un Ballo in Maschera*, for example, or in his almost Dickensian characterization of Fra Melitone in *La Forza del Destino*. Immediately prior to settling down to work on *Otello*, the composer defensively announced to his publisher Giulio Ricordi that he had been on the lookout for a comic opera libretto “for twenty years.” There’s even evidence that just before *Aida*, he briefly considered a libretto titled *Tartufo*—drawn from Molière’s satire of religious hypocrisy, a theme guaranteed to stir Verdi’s interest.

In other words, Verdi was more or less primed to “resound” once again when, in the summer of 1889, with *Otello* a triumphant fait accompli, Boito won him over with the tempting new prospect of a libretto adapted primarily from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The composer responded with a rush of enthusiasm: “We’ll write this *Falstaff* then! We won’t think for the moment of obstacles, of

age, of illness!" As it happened, the creation of his final opera was interrupted by those very hindrances over the next several years. Finally, by the end of 1892, he had completed the score, and in February 1893 *Falstaff* was introduced at La Scala in Milan (with further revisions to follow at its premieres in Rome and Paris).

Given the composer's status, *Falstaff* was essentially guaranteed to be received with reverence. Still, the fact that a comic opera could contain so much that was challenging for both its performers and its audiences must have come as a surprise. And the challenges are unconventional, not the familiar ones of vocal virtuosity or stamina: not only is the score remarkably mercurial, but the pace of the opera itself remains unrelentingly rapid, a study in coiled energy. Respectful admiration soon gave way to periods of neglect. Following the Met's (and U.S.) premiere of *Falstaff* two years later, in 1895—with Victor Maurel, who created the roles of Iago and Falstaff—there was a revival the next season but then a hiatus until 1909, when Toscanini reintroduced the work. Almost a half century on, *Falstaff* became the vehicle for Franco Zeffirelli's Met debut: that 1964 production (conducted by Leonard Bernstein in its premiere run) is being replaced for the first time by the current staging directed by Robert Carsen.

Ever since Verdi's era, a small circle of critics has contended that the highly sophisticated Boito—Verdi's junior by a generation and a Renaissance man who composed and wrote fiction and poetry as well—led the composer astray from the more readily accessible style of opera that had made him popular and that showcased his natural talents. Yet the real challenge *Falstaff* poses doesn't come from recherché musical ideas but from the sheer fertility of Verdi's material. What in earlier works might have taken an entire scene to express here incandescences within a compressed time frame, only to jostle against a fresh onrush of musical images.

Verdi, who approached 80 by the time he completed the score, took enormous pleasure in the countless discussions in which Boito engaged him as they hammered out the libretto's details. But unrelated business disputes sidetracked his attention, while the deaths of two significant friends took a psychological toll. As a counterpart to his unbridled excitement about the project he nicknamed "Big Belly," Verdi fell prey to fits of melancholy and fretted that he would not live to complete the score.

These polar aspects—the adventure of experimenting, wedded to a wistful sense of a vanishing tradition—can be discerned within the sound world Verdi constructed for *Falstaff*. No other opera by this composer tumbles into action with more headlong momentum—not even *Otello*, whose storm claps raise the curtain with a sudden shock but are accompanied by the vestigial convention of an opening chorus. *Falstaff* dispenses entirely with any hint of a prelude or choral scene-setting. Instead, he launches the opera in a metrically tripping scherzo mode that almost immediately gives voice to the rapid patter of dialogue—a strategy from which Puccini, for one, would learn much.



2013-14

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Mariusz Kwiecien as Onegin
and Anna Netrebko as Tatiana

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At the same time, *Falstaff* parades a host of fleeting backward glances over the traditional tropes of Italian opera—structures and idioms Verdi had inherited and developed across his entire oeuvre. Instead of being unfolded at leisure, these dart unpredictably in and out of the hyperactive, continually metamorphosing soundscape Verdi composed for the array of six scenes economically laid out by Boito's scheme. Think of the brief pockets of lyricism introduced by the young pair of lovers, Nannetta and Fenton, which Boito suggested would be more effective when "sprinkled" throughout the opera, "like powdered sugar on a cake," in contrast to a standard drawn-out duet. Or take the rhetoric of the revenge aria in which Ford momentarily channels a hint of the jealous Moor. The climactic comic frenzy of the second act's finale resembles a mash-up of the most dazzling moment of Rossinian "organized chaos" with a sturdily constructed Mozartean ensemble.

For their source material, Verdi and Boito turned to what is among the thinnest, most lightweight of Shakespeare's comedies. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Sir John—much as he fears giving up "my kingdom" (his ample girth) in the opera's opening scene—is but a shadow of the imposing life force who will emerge in the *Henry* chronicle plays. The Falstaff of *Merry Wives* is reduced to the butt of situation-comedy plotting by the denizens of what the critic Graham Bradshaw describes as "the respectably prosaic world of middle-class Windsor."

Yet this uncharacteristically slim, straightforward comedy—according to apocryphal legend, hastily put together to satisfy Queen Elizabeth's request to see a play showing "Sir John in love"—provided the practical framework needed in which to bring the most complex and richly layered of Shakespeare's comic characters to life on the lyric stage. The genius of what Boito and Verdi achieved together was to forge an opera that is, as Bradshaw puts it, "paradoxically more truly Shakespearean than its Shakespearean source."

This extends beyond Boito's clever interpolation of material from the *Henry* plays into Sir John's monologues. As a "translation" of Shakespeare to the dimensions of the operatic medium, *Falstaff* brims over in text and music alike with the equivalent of Shakespearean abundance. Verdi and his librettist had enormous fun trading wordplay back and forth as they parsed the subtleties of Boito's libretto—an exuberant concoction of puns, varied metrical verse forms, interrelated images, and archaic vocabulary alluding to Italy's literary heritage (including such writers as Boccaccio).

Verdi's music meanwhile distills and juxtaposes the divergent perspectives that comprise the opera: the idealistic young lovers, the farcical plot set in motion by Alice (Verdi describes her role as "stirring the porridge"), the dramatic conflict introduced by her husband, Ford, who conspires with Dr. Caius, and the self-serving natural force embodied by Falstaff himself, omnipresent throughout the opera—even when Sir John is offstage.

In the third act, in which the comic momentum of the first two yields to a more ritualistic atmosphere for the final scene in Windsor Forest, Verdi counters

Program Note CONTINUED

the graphic “realism” of his prismatic orchestration with something new: a miraculous evocation of the numinous world that surrounds that society and Falstaff alike. His music for the fearful specters that are summoned to Herne’s Oak and then comically revealed pays tribute to the sources of early Romanticism and its penchant for midsummer magic. But as in the finale of Mozart’s *Figaro*, the long night’s comedy of errors serves as the prelude to a reconciliation: the fat knight’s “lesson” prepares the way for the young generation to be recognized and securely united in love. Verdi then gathers all the riotous energy of what has preceded and reconfigures it as a fugue, that emblem of strictly organized discipline—his greatest joke of all.

—Thomas May

The Cast and Creative Team



James Levine

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR (CINCINNATI, OHIO)

MET HISTORY Since his 1971 company debut leading *Tosca*, he has led nearly 2,500 performances at the Met—more than any other conductor in the company's history. Of the 85 operas he has led at the Met, 13 were company premieres (including *Stiffelio*, *I Lombardi*, *I Vespri Siciliani*, *La Cenerentola*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Erwartung*, *Moses und Aron*, *Idomeneo*, and *La Clemenza di Tito*). He also led the world premieres of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*.

THIS SEASON In his 41st season at the Met he conducts revivals of *Così fan tutte* and *Wozzeck*; the new production of *Falstaff*; three concerts with the Met Orchestra at Carnegie Hall with soloists Joyce DiDonato, Peter Mattei, and Lynn Harrell; and staged scenes from works by Berlioz, Donizetti, and Mozart, and Stravinsky's one-act *Mavra* at Juilliard's Peter Jay Sharp Theater in a joint project between the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and the Juilliard School.



Robert Carsen

DIRECTOR/LIGHTING DESIGNER (TORONTO, CANADA)

THIS SEASON *Falstaff* at the Met, *Elektra* at the Paris Opera, *Platée* at Vienna's Theater an der Wien and Paris's Opéra Comique, and *The Queen of Spades* in Zurich.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Eugene Onegin* (debut, 1997) and Boito's *Mefistofele*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS *Rigoletto* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, *Don Giovanni* at La Scala, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* at the Theater an der Wien (also designer), *My Fair Lady* and *Candide* at Paris's Théâtre du Châtelet, *Rinaldo* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* at Glyndebourne, *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Munich's Bavarian State Opera, *La Traviata* at Venice's La Fenice, *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Salzburg Festival, and *Tannhäuser*, *Capriccio*, *Les Boréades*, *Rusalka*, *Alcina*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Lohengrin*, *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*, *Nabucco*, and *Manon Lescaut* at the Paris Opera. Additional productions include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, English National Opera, and La Scala, Wagner's *Ring* cycle in Cologne, and *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Fidelio*, and *Carmen* in Amsterdam.



Scene from *The Enchanted Island*

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The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Paul Steinberg

SET DESIGNER (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON *Falstaff* at the Met and in Amsterdam, *Der Rosenkavalier* at Glyndebourne, and *Billy Budd* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

MET PRODUCTION *Un Ballo in Maschera* (debut, 2012).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent productions include Handel's *Deidamia* and Cavalli's *Ercole Amante* (Amsterdam), *Falstaff* (La Scala), *La Périchole* and *Don Giovanni* (New York City Opera), *Peter Grimes* and *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* (Deutsche Oper Berlin), and *La Finta Giardiniera* (Theater an der Wien). He has also created sets for *Billy Budd*, *Peter Grimes*, and *Lulu* for English National Opera, *Falstaff* and *La Calisto* for Covent Garden, *Arabella* and *L'Orfeo* for Opera North, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Wozzeck*, and *Turandot* for Welsh National Opera. Additional credits include *The Queen of Spades*, *Rinaldo*, *Rodelinda*, *Orlando*, and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (Munich), Argento's *Casanova's Homecoming* (Minnesota Opera), *Il Trovatore* (Bregenz Festival), *Lohengrin* (Bastille Opera), *Il Turco in Italia* (Berlin Staatsoper), *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (Chicago), and *Nabucco* (Düsseldorf).



Brigitte Reiffenstuel

COSTUME DESIGNER (MUNICH, GERMANY)

THIS SEASON *Falstaff* at the Met.

MET PRODUCTIONS *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Giulio Cesare*, and *Il Trovatore* (debut, 2009).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She has designed costumes for Covent Garden including *Falstaff* (also for La Scala), *Adriana Lecouvreur* (also for Barcelona, Vienna, and the Paris Opera), *Faust* (also in Lille, Monte Carlo, Trieste, and Valencia), and *Elektra*; for English National Opera, including *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Peter Grimes* (also Oviedo, De Vlaamse Opera, and Deutsche Oper Berlin), *Tosca*, *La Damnation de Faust*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (also for Gothenburg Opera, Washington National Opera, and Canadian Opera), and *Boris Godunov*; for Glyndebourne Festival Opera, including *Giulio Cesare* (also in Chicago and Lille); and for Opera North, including *Rigoletto*, *Macbeth* (also New Zealand Opera), and *Il Trovatore* (also Opera Ireland). Additional work includes *Don Giovanni* (La Scala), *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, and *Madama Butterfly* (Santa Fe), *Il Trovatore* (San Francisco, Chicago), *Don Carlo* (Frankfurt), *Billy Budd* and *The Makropulos Case* (Chicago), *Lulu* (Munich), *Semele* (Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées), and *Macbeth* (Houston, Chicago).

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED

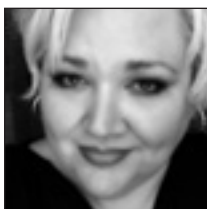


Peter Van Praet

LIGHTING DESIGNER (ANTWERP, BELGIUM)

THIS SEASON *Falstaff* for his debut at the Met, *Platée* at Vienna's Theater an der Wien and Paris's Opéra Comique, *The Magic Flute* at Paris's Bastille Opera, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (with director Valentina Carrasco) in Lyon, and *Das Rheingold* for Houston Grand Opera (La Fura dels Baus).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has worked on a number of productions directed by Robert Carsen, most recently *The Makropulos Case* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Strasbourg, *Don Giovanni* at La Scala, *Falstaff* at Covent Garden and La Scala, and *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. With stage director Pierre Audi he has worked on *Les Troyens* (Amsterdam) and Handel's *Alcina* and Rameau's *Zoroastre* (Drottningholm and Amsterdam). He also works regularly with the Catalan performing company La Fura dels Baus, most recently on director Carlus Padrissa's productions of *Les Troyens* in Sofia and Valencia and Wagner's *Ring* cycle (Valencia and Florence); and with Alex Ollé and Valentina Carrasco on Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* (Brussels, Rome, Adelaide, Barcelona, and Buenos Aires) and Enescu's *Oedipe* in Brussels and Buenos Aires.



Stephanie Blythe

MEZZO-SOPRANO (MONGAUP VALLEY, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* at the Met, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera* for her debut with the San Diego Opera, a concert with the New York Philharmonic, recitals in San Francisco and Princeton, and a U.S. tour with Les Violons du Roy.

MET APPEARANCES More than 200 performances of 26 roles including Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Fricka in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Eduige in *Rodelinda*, Amneris in *Aida*, Ježibaba in *Rusalka*, Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex*, Ulrica, Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*, and the Alto Solo in *Parsifal* (debut, 1995).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Azucena for her debut at the San Francisco Opera and in concert for her debut with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Baba the Turk at Covent Garden, Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* at the Arizona Opera, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* at the Pittsburgh Opera, Isabella in *L'Italiana in Algeri* and *Carmen* in Seattle, Azucena and Mistress Quickly at Covent Garden, Isabella in Philadelphia and Santa Fe, and Cornelia and Mistress Quickly at the Paris Opera. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.

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Jennifer Johnson Cano

MEZZO-SOPRANO (ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI)

THIS SEASON Meg Page in *Falstaff* and La Bersi in *Andrea Chénier* at the Met, Sharp Ears in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* in concert with the Cleveland Orchestra, Marguerite in *La Damnation de Faust* in concert with the Tucson Symphony, and Diana in Cavalli's *La Calisto* with the Cincinnati Opera.

MET APPEARANCES Wellgunde in *Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*, Waltraute in *Die Walküre*, Emilia in *Otello*, Mércèdes in *Carmen*, the Sandman in *Hansel and Gretel*, Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, and a Bridesmaid in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (debut, 2009).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She sang the world premieres of Mason Bates's *Afterlife* with the Phoenix Symphony and John Harbison's *Crossroads* at SummerFest in La Jolla. She has also sung Berio's *Folksongs* with Chicago's Collaborative Arts Institute and appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Orchestra of St. Lukes. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



Angela Meade

SOPRANO (CENTRALIA, WASHINGTON)

THIS SEASON The title role of *Norma* and Alice Ford in *Falstaff* at the Met, Fidelia in Puccini's *Edgar* in concert in Frankfurt, and Mathilde in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* in Turin for her Italian debut.

MET APPEARANCES The title role of *Anna Bolena*, Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, Elvira in *Ernani* (debut, 2008), and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include debuts last season with the Vienna State Opera as Elena in *I Vespri Siciliani*, with the Los Angeles Opera as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, and with the Washington National Opera as Norma. She has also sung Lucrezia in a concert performance of Verdi's *I Due Foscari* with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux* at the Dallas Opera, Anna Bolena and the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts, and the title role of *Semiramide* at the Caramoor Festival. She was a winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and appeared in the documentary film about that competition, *The Audition*. She is the recipient of the Met's 2012 Beverly Sills Artist Award, established by Agnes Varis and Karl Lichtman.



Lisette Oropesa

SOPRANO (NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA)

THIS SEASON Nannetta in *Falstaff* and Sophie in *Werther* at the Met, Amalia in Verdi's *I Masnadieri* with Washington Concert Opera, *Carmina Burana* for her debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Sophie with the San Francisco Opera, and Susannah in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Ravinia Festival.

MET APPEARANCES Nearly 100 performances of 13 roles including Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Miranda in *The Enchanted Island*, Susanna, Amore in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Lisette in *La Rondine*, Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*, Dew Fairy in *Hansel and Gretel*, and Cretan Woman in *Idomeneo* (debut, 2006).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Arizona Opera, Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* for her debut with Michigan Opera Theatre, and Susanna with the Santa Fe Opera. She has also sung Romilda in Handel's *Serse* in San Francisco, Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* with the Pittsburgh Opera, Ismene in *Mitridate* with Munich's Bavarian State Opera, and Lucia at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



Paolo Fanale

TENOR (PALERMO, ITALY)

THIS SEASON Fenton in *Falstaff* for his debut at the Met and with the Dutch National Opera, Hylas in *Les Troyens* at La Scala, Alfredo in *La Traviata* with the Israeli Opera, and Gennaro in *Lucrezia Borgia* and the Duke in *Rigoletto* in Padua.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent engagements include Fenton for his debut with the Paris Opera, Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* at Vienna's Theater an der Wien, Nicias in *Thaïs* in Valencia, and Wilhelm Meister in Thomas's *Mignon* in Geneva. He has also sung Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with the Finnish National Opera, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Tebaldo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* in Catania, Arbace in *Idomeneo* at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* in Oslo, and Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* in Verona.

The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED



Ambrogio Maestri

BARITONE (PAVIA, ITALY)

THIS SEASON The title role of *Falstaff* at the Met, with La Scala on tour in Japan, and in Amsterdam and São Paulo, Doctor Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with the Vienna State Opera and Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Tonio in *Pagliacci* at the Vienna State Opera, the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* in Turin, Amonasro in *Aida* at La Scala, and Scarpia in *Tosca* in Barcelona.

MET APPEARANCES Doctor Dulcamara, Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Amonasro (debut, 2004).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has sung Count Anckarström in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Don Carlo in *La Forza del Destino*, Iago in *Otello*, and Amonasro at La Scala, the Arena di Verona, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, and in Barcelona, Florence, and Rome; the title role of *Nabucco* at La Scala and the Arena di Verona; the title role of *Rigoletto* at the Paris Opera and in Berlin; Germont in *La Traviata* at La Scala, and Venice, Tokyo, Lisbon, and Berlin; and Rolando in *La Battaglia di Legnano*, and the title roles of *Nabucco* and *Simon Boccanegra* at the Arena di Verona, Vienna State Opera, and Bavarian State Opera.



Franco Vassallo

BARITONE (MILAN, ITALY)

THIS SEASON Ford in *Falstaff* at the Met, Baron Valdeburgo in *La Straniera* in Zurich, Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore* at La Scala, the title role of *Rigoletto* in Munich, and *Caterina Cornaro* at the Montepellier Festival.

MET APPEARANCES Count di Luna, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Riccardo in *I Puritani*, Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (debut, 2005), and Ezio in *Attila*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include *Rigoletto* in Dresden and at Munich's Bavarian State Opera, the title role of *Macbeth* at La Scala, and Amonasro in *Aida* at Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin and Arena di Verona. He has also sung Iago in *Otello* in Zurich, Count di Luna at Venice's La Fenice, Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* and Iago at the Vienna State Opera, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* and *Macbeth* in Munich, the title role of *Nabucco* with Washington National Opera, and *Macbeth*, Amonasro, and *Rigoletto* in Hamburg. Additional engagements include performances at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Covent Garden, Los Angeles Opera, Rome Opera, and Florence's Teatro Communale.