

*Giacomo Puccini*

# La Rondine

CONDUCTOR

**Marco Armiliato**

PRODUCTION

**Nicolas Joël**

STAGED BY

**Stephen Barlow**

SET DESIGNER

**Ezio Frigerio**

COSTUME DESIGNER

**Franca Squarciapino**

LIGHTING DESIGNER

**Duane Schuler**

GENERAL MANAGER

**Peter Gelb**

MUSIC DIRECTOR

**James Levine**

## **Commedia Lirica in Three Acts**

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami, after A. M. Willner and Heinz Reichert

Saturday, January 10, 2009, 1:00–3:25pm

## **New Production**

The production of *La Rondine* was made possible by a generous gift from **The Sybil B. Harrington Endowment Fund**.

*La Rondine* is a co-production of Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse and Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

# The Metropolitan Opera

*2008–09 Season*

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The 22nd Metropolitan Opera performance of

*Giacomo Puccini's*

# La Rondine

Conductor

**Marco Armiliato**

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Yvette	Ruggero
<b>Monica Yunus</b>	<b>Roberto Alagna</b>
Bianca	Adolf
Alyson Cambridge **	Marty Singleton
Prunier	Georgette
Marius Brenciu	Anne Nonnemacher
Magda	Gabriele
Angela Gheorghiu	Belinda Oswald
Lisette	Lolette
Lisette Oropesa **	Mary Hughes
Suzy	Rabonnier
Elizabeth DeShong	Jason Hendrix
Rambaldo	A Singer
Samuel Ramey	Ashley Emerson*
Gobin	A Butler
Tony Stevenson **	Roger Andrews
Péricaud	
David Won **	
Crébillon	PIANO SOLO
David Crawford	<b>Steven Eldredge</b>

Saturday, January 10, 2009, 1:00–3:25pm

This afternoon's performance is being transmitted live in high definition to movie theaters worldwide.  
*The Met: Live in HD* series is made possible by a generous grant from the **Neubauer Family Foundation**.



Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

Roberto Alagna and  
Angela Gheorghiu as  
Ruggero and Magda  
in a scene from  
Puccini's *La Rondine*

Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**  
Musical Preparation **Joan Dornemann**,  
**Steven Eldredge**, **John Churchwell**, **Joseph Colaneri**,  
**Carrie-Ann Matheson**, **Carol Isaac**, and  
**Leonardo Vordonì**  
Stage Band Conductor **Jeffrey Goldberg**  
Assistant Stage Directors **Peter McClintock**,  
**Sharon Thomas**, **Tomer Zvulun**  
Prompter **Carol Isaac**  
Met Titles **Christopher Bergen**  
Wigs executed by **Metropolitan Opera Wig Department**

*La Rondine* is performed by arrangement with European American Music Distributors LLC, U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition Vienna. Orchestral realization of Act III is by Lorenzo Ferrero.

This performance is made possible in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Before the performance begins, please switch off cell phones and other electronic devices.

#### **Met Titles**

To activate, press the red button to the right of the screen in front of your seat and follow the instructions provided. To turn off the display, press the red button once again. If you have questions please ask an usher at intermission.

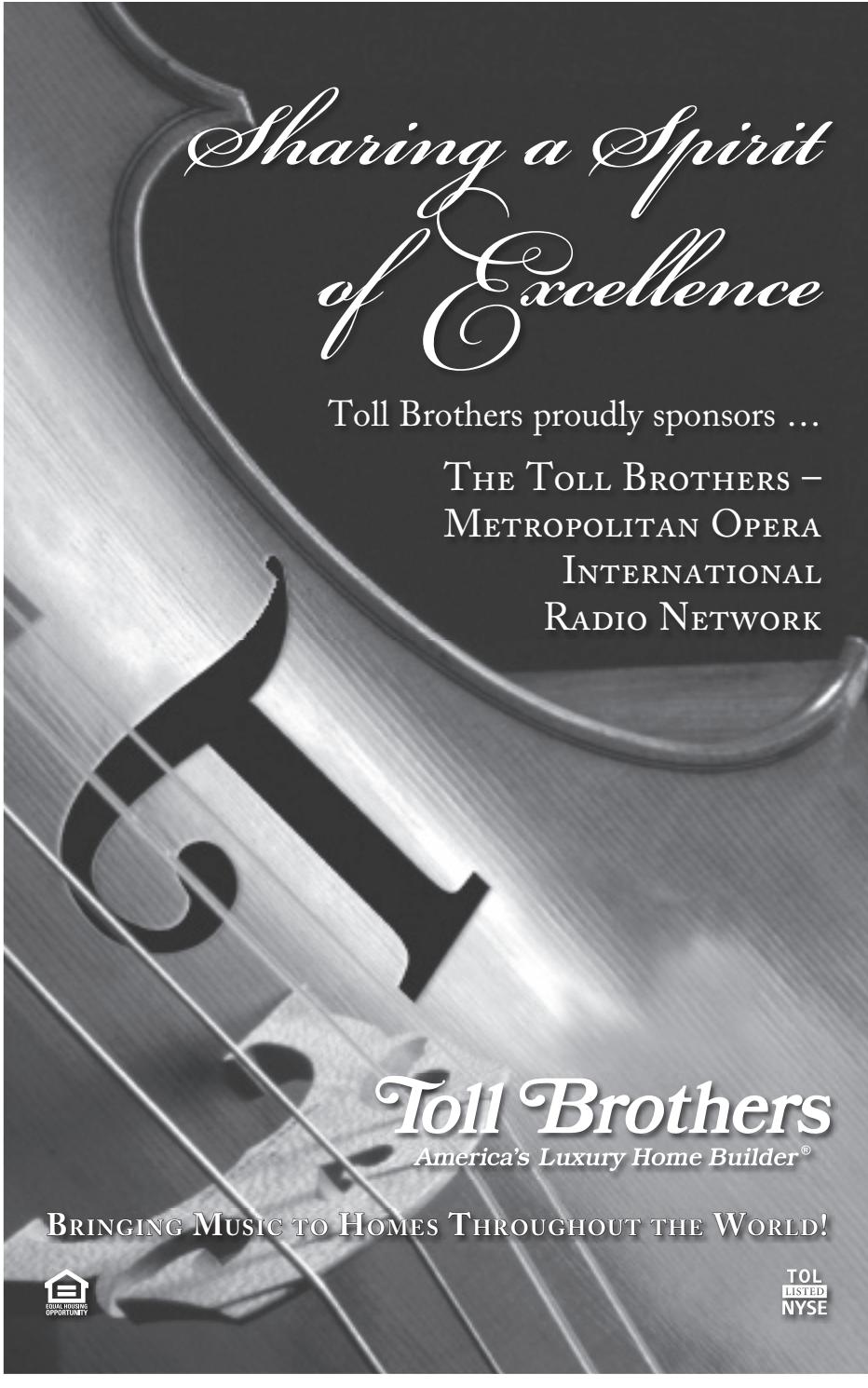
Yamaha is the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera.

Latecomers will not be admitted during the performance.

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# Synopsis

Paris and the Riviera in the 1920s

## Act I

Magda's house in Paris, late afternoon

*Pause*

## Act II

The Bullier dance hall, later that evening

*Intermission*

## Act III

A hotel on the Riviera, several months later

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## Act I

Magda, mistress of the rich banker Rambaldo, is serving tea to her friends as the poet Prunier lectures Yvette, Bianca, and Suzy about the latest Parisian fashion for sentimental love. No one except Magda takes him seriously. Prunier starts to tell a story he has written about a girl, Doretta, who rejects the love of a king. When he says he has been unable to finish it, Magda improvises an ending to Doretta's dream for him by making up a second verse about how the girl rejects riches for the love of a student ("Chi il bel sogno di Doretta"). She thinks about her own flirtations and recalls an encounter with a young man at Bullier's dance hall. Rambaldo says he knows what love means and gives Magda a pearl necklace, which she accepts without changing her opinion that love has nothing to do with wealth. Prunier offers to read Magda's palm and predicts that she will go south in pursuit of romance and happiness—just like "la rondine," the swallow. Ruggero, a newcomer to Paris, is excited to be in the city. Rambaldo asks the others where Ruggero should spend his first night in Paris. They decide on Bullier's, and before sending Ruggero on his way, Magda's maid Lisette and the other women flirt with the handsome young man. When the guests depart, Magda impulsively decides to go to Bullier as well, and rushes off to change into a simpler dress. Lisette sneaks in dressed in Magda's clothes and is intercepted by Prunier, who furtively flirts with her. They leave together. Magda emerges for an adventure at Bullier's, her mind full of Prunier's prophesy and Doretta's dream.

## Act II

Bullier's is alive with a noisy crowd of students, flower girls, artists, soldiers, and aristocrats. Ruggero sits alone at a table. When Magda enters, she is immediately surrounded by a group of students, but says she already has a date and joins Ruggero, who doesn't recognize her. She introduces herself as Paulette. When

## Synopsis *continued*

she teases him about his probable love affairs, he replies that should he ever love a woman, it would be forever. While they talk and dance, they both realize that they have fallen in love with each other. When Lisette arrives with Prunier, she is startled by the sight of Magda, but Prunier, understanding the situation, convinces her that it is someone else with a chance resemblance (Ensemble: "Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso"). Suddenly Rambaldo appears, and Prunier asks Lisette to keep Ruggero out of sight. Magda rejects Prunier's pleas to escape, and Rambaldo confronts her, demanding an explanation. She replies that she has found true love and is going to leave him. As the waiters clear the now-empty dance hall, Ruggero returns and comforts Magda. They leave together to start a new life.

### Act III

Magda and Ruggero have been living in a hotel on the Riviera, but their money is running out. Ruggero says he has written to his mother for her consent to their marriage and paints an idyllic picture of his family's home in the country. Magda is dismayed that her lover doesn't know anything of her past. After he has left, Prunier and Lisette arrive, quarreling: he has been trying to make her a singer but her debut was a disaster. Magda tells Lisette she would be glad to take her into service once more. Prunier, who can't imagine Magda continuing her fantasy life, delivers a message from Rambaldo: he is ready to welcome her back on any terms. Prunier leaves as Ruggero returns with a letter from his mother. She is delighted that her son has found a good and virtuous bride who will be worthy of his children. Unable to keep silent any longer, Magda tells a stunned Ruggero that she is "contaminated." She can be his mistress but never his wife. He protests and begs Magda not to leave him. Magda, heartbroken, slowly makes her way out of his life.

Own the Met's *The Magic Flute* on DVD! The 2006 *Live in HD* transmission of Julie Taymor's production of Mozart's timeless operatic fairy tale has just been released. The Met's first self-produced DVD is initially available exclusively at the Met Opera Shop for \$25. Conducted by Music Director James Levine, this abridged, English-language version stars Ying Huang as Pamina, Erika Miklósa as Queen of the Night, Matthew Polenzani as Tamino, Nathan Gunn as Papageno, and René Pape as Sarastro.



*Giacomo Puccini*

# La Rondine

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*Premiere: Théâtre de l'Opéra, Monte Carlo, 1917*

This elegant romance is the least-known work of the mature Giacomo Puccini. The story concerns a kept woman who defies convention to chase a dream of romantic love with an earnest, if naïve, young man. She is the swallow, or "rondine," of the title, a bird who flies toward the sun. The central relationship unfolds in colorful locales in Paris and the south of France, all evoked with superb musical details. Puccini was originally approached for this project by Viennese producers who wanted an operetta. This idea was quickly abandoned, but the original conception had an effect on the finished product, with its abundance of waltzes, romantic vision of Paris, and lightness of tone. History worked against *La Rondine*'s success, however: Italy and Austria became enemies during World War I, precluding a Vienna premiere, and the opera quietly opened in neutral Monte Carlo, never finding a permanent place in the repertoire. That loss is scandalous, since *La Rondine*, judged on its own merits rather than compared to other operas with similar themes, is a fascinating work. Given the right cast and production, it blooms into its rightful place in the glorious Puccini canon.

### *The Creators*

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) was immensely popular in his own lifetime, and his works remain staples in the repertory of most of the world's opera companies. His operas are celebrated for their mastery of detail, sensitivity to everyday subjects, copious melody, and economy of expression. Giuseppe Adami (1878–1946) provided Puccini with the libretto for *La Rondine* and would later work with him on *Il Tabarro* and *Turandot*. He also edited Puccini's letters for publication after the composer's death and was noted for his work in the theater and as a film director. The outline of *La Rondine* was provided by the Viennese author, journalist, and composer Alfred Maria Willner (1859–1929) and his collaborator Heinz Reichert (1877–1940), who wrote operetta librettos for several of the most popular composers of the day, including Franz Lehár.

### *The Setting*

Each of the three acts of *La Rondine* evokes a different aspect of French life, as well as a different take on the nature of love. Act I is set in the title character's elegant salon, where she is a fashionable woman kept by a wealthy man. Poets and other free spirits engage in witty banter. Act II is set in the raucous Bal

Bullier, a famous Latin Quarter dance hall popular with students, the working poor, the adventurous middle class, and tourists. The third act is set outside Nice on the French Riviera. Puccini originally imagined the setting to be in the time of the Second Empire (circa 1860), although the milieu he depicted is not specific to any single historical moment. The current production places the action in the 1920s.

### *The Music*

The score of *La Rondine* is sophisticated and economical. One of its most striking features is the use of ambient sounds, a touch Puccini had always excelled in as a master of the verismo genre. Off-stage bells sound in Act III; the second act ends with a woman on the street singing a warning against faith in love; and a lead character plays the piano on stage in the very first scene, which becomes the introduction to the opera's most famous aria, "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta." *La Rondine* flows with the sort of melody that could only come from Puccini, including the dreamy dance sequences in Act II and the ensemble in the same scene, "Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso," which can make a valid claim to being the single most gorgeous tune this composer ever produced.

### *La Rondine at the Met*

*La Rondine* had its United States premiere at the Met in 1928, in a beautiful production designed by Joseph Urban. The Spanish diva Lucrezia Bori and Italian tenor Beniamino Gigli headed the cast. The piece was reasonably successful, but the precarious financial situation of the Depression years made it a risky proposition. Bori sang the lead in all 15 performances over the course of the initial run and the two following seasons, and chose it as part of her farewell performances at the Met in 1936. George Balanchine choreographed the dances for the 1936 performances. The opera then disappeared from the Met until this season's new production.

## Program Note

You would hardly think that Giacomo Puccini, of all the great opera composers, needs a recognition booster. Yet the programming of opera companies around the world for the 150th anniversary of his birth—which was celebrated on December 22, 2008—has brought reminders that there is in fact fresh room for discovery, above all when the topic is *La Rondine*.

Puccini had already attained towering international fame by the time he created *La Rondine*, but the opera failed to catch on and fell into semi-obscurity within a few decades. With this new production, *La Rondine* returns to the Met for the first time since Lucrezia Bori chose to play “the swallow” of the title for her career swan song in 1936. It was the legendary Spanish soprano (and reputed descendent of the notorious Borgia clan) who had introduced the role to the Met stage in 1928 during the opera’s U.S. premiere, which occurred four years after Puccini’s death. Audiences in London had to wait until 1974 for the first professional staging there.

*La Rondine* is not only the most neglected opera of Puccini’s maturity; it’s also the most misunderstood. The confusion begins with the issue of genre. Even today, casual references to *La Rondine* as an “operetta” abound, mistaking the gentle touch that is its signature for a frothy attempt at what would have been for Puccini the equivalent of “crossover.” In fact, the journey toward *La Rondine* did involve a stop in the world of Viennese operetta, but that was not Puccini’s final destination.

A long search for a new project followed completion of *La Fanciulla del West* (which had its world premiere at the Met in 1910). Literature or contemporary theater were the sources that typically grabbed Puccini’s attention as potential for operatic treatment. But for several years after *Fanciulla*, the composer flitted restlessly over a motley assortment of possibilities. These ranged from the novel *Lorna Doone* to Oscar Wilde’s unfinished *A Florentine Tragedy* (later turned into an opera by Alexander Zemlinsky, Schoenberg’s teacher) and even a bizarrely imagistic, decadent dramatization of the Children’s Crusade by the controversial poet Gabriele d’Annunzio.

During his search, Puccini did settle on a gritty, tragic new play that he would eventually transform into *Il Tabarro*, the first panel of *Il Trittico*. At the same time, however, he began to express an interest in lighter fare: “I have a desire to laugh and to make other people laugh,” he wrote to one of his confidantes. While he was in Vienna in 1913 for the local premiere of *Fanciulla*, an unlikely opportunity arrived in the form of an invitation by the director of one of the city’s leading theaters for operetta, a genre then in its “silver age” as represented by the enormously popular works of Franz Lehár. The princely sum attached to the commission may have made it an undertaking Puccini couldn’t refuse, but that hardly justifies the dismissively holier-than-thou insinuations by some critics that his attraction to the new project was merely financial.

## Program Note *continued*

Indeed, the composer immediately expressed frustration with the notion of writing a conventional operetta—separated into numbers and with spoken dialogue—when he received the first sketch proposed by Alfred Maria Willner, a librettist for Lehár. Puccini complained about “the usual slipshod, banal operetta” with its lack of character study and “dramatic interest” and, in an often-quoted statement, concluded that “an operetta is something I shall never do; a comic opera, yes, see *Rosenkavalier*, only more entertaining and more organic.” Willner paired up with a colleague, Heinz Reichert, to concoct another scenario drawing on patterns familiar from both grand opera and operetta and revolving around the figure of a beautiful courtesan who attempts to take flight from her gilded cage to pursue romantic bliss.

For his part, Puccini turned to a new collaborator, Giuseppe Adami—a generation younger than the composer—who would also furnish the librettos for *Il Tabarro* and *Turandot*. Adami not only translated the German libretto but reshaped and adapted significant details in response to Puccini’s demands. Composition stretched over two years, while Puccini worked simultaneously on *Il Tabarro*. The third act in particular—by consensus the opera’s most problematic—proved to be a stumbling block.

Meanwhile, the First World War introduced new complications, with Italy entering the conflict as part of the alliance against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. *La Rondine*’s premiere was given in neutral territory on March 27, 1917, at the Grand Théâtre in Monte Carlo (whose visionary director, Raoul Gunsbourg, was the first to stage *La Damnation de Faust* as an opera). Puccini remained unsatisfied and produced two more rewrites; the pivotal differences involved the opera’s ending. The first of these was geared toward the belated Viennese premiere in 1920. The second introduced a melodramatic, *verismo* denouement in which Magda, instead of choosing to leave Ruggero, is angrily abandoned by her lover. But Puccini’s original intuitions for the ending, as in the standard version used in Nicolas Joël’s production, are arguably far more satisfying—certainly for 21st-century audiences. As Michele Girardi observes in his excellent study, *Puccini: His International Art*, “Magda is a modern woman who does not want the same end as other Puccini heroines, from whom she is very different.”

It was in fact *La Rondine*’s differences from Puccini’s other work—above all its femininity—that made earlier audiences hesitant. “The element of tragedy,” wrote *Time* magazine of the original Met production in 1928, “is missing from the soft, curving arias and duets.” Yet from our perspective, *La Rondine* emerges as a fascinating hybrid, both in its emotional negotiations and in its musical palette. Commentators like to refer to the scenario as a kind of tepid rewrite of *La Traviata*, but it’s precisely the tension between the idealized love of romantic opera and a more tempered, realistic view that generates Puccini’s unique brand of sophisticated melancholy in *La Rondine*. Thus even the echoes of *La Bohème* (also frequently noted, with the second act as a conflation of

## Program Note *continued*

Mimi and Rodolfo's love duet and the bustling Café Momus) acquire a tone of gently ironic self-parody—as if the composer is looking back on the irretrievable illusions of his own artistic past.

The opera's framing devices subtly shape this fundamental tension. Puccini opens with a tone of worldly, frivolous conversation. But the very song with which the poet Prunier (in part a lampooning of the eccentric d'Annunzio) sets out mockingly to illustrate the power of "sentimental love" soon becomes its vehicle. Just as swiftly as the score slips from a chattily prosaic mood into dreamy rhapsody, Magda is drawn into her memory of unfulfilled love.

Much of *La Rondine* is about the role-playing Magda so eagerly undertakes to enjoy a temporary escape from the realistic compromises of her life with the wealthy (and extraordinarily gentlemanly) sugar daddy Rambaldo. She does this through an idyllic but ultimately unsustainable vision of romantic love, recalled in Act I and then dreamily acted out in the rest of the opera until she snaps out of the illusion in Act III. Magda completes Prunier's song and then sets out to complete the love story from which she fled in her youth. *La Rondine*'s bittersweet irony is that she must flee again: only in its incompleteness—Magda's memory of the happiness she might have had with Ruggero—can the story remain vital. Even the sigh-like motif we hear within the opera's first minute, associated with Magda's elusive vision of love, has a fragmentary character, like the hint of a waltz wafted on the breeze.

Dance elements—particularly in the sequences of Act II—flavor much of the score, although *La Rondine*'s single loveliest melody (the basis of the quartet ensemble at the Bullier dance hall) began as a simple lullaby the composer wrote to words of his nephew. But along with the warmth and directness of his melodic imagination, Puccini gives wide rein to his orchestral imagination. Prickling dissonances announce the entry of the provincial newcomer Ruggero, while the simple pentatonic tune of the singer near the end of Act II is doubled by piccolo to produce an eerie whistling effect. The comic counterpoint of the affair between Lisette and Prunier, so crucial to the third act, includes a brilliantly demented, paranoid depiction of the catcalls and boos left echoing in Lisette's head after her stage fiasco.

Such details are second nature to Puccini's musical-theatrical savvy. Much of the music in Act III is recycled from earlier in the opera, as if to emphasize that the lovers are living on borrowed time, their love an *égoïsme à deux* in a kind of suspended animation. And in the tolling bells, as Julian Budden remarks, we hear "the death-knell of the lovers' idyll." Yet unlike his famous tragic heroines, Puccini provides a soft landing for his swallow: all three acts, quite unusually, end with a muted touch, the last including a delicately floated A-flat from Magda (with perhaps a hint of the Marschallin's resigned "Ja, ja"). Having specialized in operas about love experienced to the breaking point, in *La Rondine* Puccini leaves us with its delicate, indelible perfume. —Thomas May

# The Cast and Creative Team



**Marco Armiliato**  
CONDUCTOR (GENOA, ITALY)

**THIS SEASON** The Opening Night Gala, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Rondine*, and *Adriana Lecouvreur* at the Met; *La Traviata* in Berlin; *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Toulouse; *Tosca* in San Francisco; and *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Vienna State Opera.

**MET APPEARANCES** Nearly 200 performances, including *La Bohème* (debut, 1998), *La Traviata*, *La Fille du Régiment*, *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Sly*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** In recent seasons he has led *Un Ballo in Maschera* with the San Francisco Opera; *Turandot* at Covent Garden; *La Rondine* at the Paris Opera; *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Bohème*, and *Il Trovatore* at the Bavarian State Opera; *Don Giovanni* in Hamburg; *Aida* in Berlin; and *Manon Lescaut*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Carmen*, and *La Traviata* at the Vienna State Opera.



**Nicolas Joël**  
DIRECTOR (PARIS, FRANCE)

**THIS SEASON** *La Rondine* at the Met.

**MET APPEARANCES** *Andrea Chénier* (debut, 1996) and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1998).

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** *Ring cycles* in Lyon, Wiesbaden, and Strasbourg; *Aida* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Vienna State Opera; *Faust* in Toulouse; *Dido and Aeneas* at the Paris Opera; *La Rondine* for his debut at La Scala; and *Lohengrin* in Copenhagen. He has also directed *Parsifal* and *Faust* for the San Francisco Opera, *La Wally* in Düsseldorf, *La Forza del Destino* and *Aida* in Zurich, *Faust* in Vienna, and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in Madrid and Toulouse. He was named a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government and was recently named director of the Paris Opera.



**Stephen Barlow**  
DIRECTOR (MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA)

**THIS SEASON** *La Rondine* for his Met debut and *Tosca* and *Hänsel und Gretel* for London's Opera Holland Park.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** Recent productions include *Tosca* for Opera Holland Park, *La Traviata*

# The Cast and Creative Team *continued*

for Singapore Lyric Opera, *Carmen* for London's Riverside Opera, the London premiere of Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella* for UCOpera, *Dovetales* (a collection of Jonathan Dove operas) for Glyndebourne Festival Studio, and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial By Jury* for the Covent Garden Festival. He has staged revivals of *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly* for Covent Garden, *La Rondine* for the San Francisco Opera and in Monte Carlo, and *Otello* at Glyndebourne. Future directing engagements include new productions of *Otello* and *Faust* for the San Francisco Opera and *Don Giovanni* for Opera Holland Park. He has also worked for the Royal National Theatre in London and the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

## Ezio Frigerio

SET DESIGNER (MILAN, ITALY)

THIS SEASON *La Rondine* at the Met.

MET APPEARANCES *Francesca da Rimini* (debut, 1983), *Il Trovatore* (1987), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1998).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS His set, costume, and lighting designs include numerous productions for opera, ballet, theater, film, and television. Operatic credits include Cherubini's *Medée* for the Paris Opera, *Elektra* for Brussels's La Monnaie, *Ernani* and *Fidelio* for La Scala, *Norma* for the Vienna State Opera, and *Nabucco* for the San Francisco Opera. Among his many film credits are *Cyrano de Bergerac*, for which he received an Academy Award nomination for best art direction and set design.

## Franca Squarciapino

COSTUME DESIGNER (ROME, ITALY)

THIS SEASON *La Rondine* at the Met.

MET APPEARANCES *Francesca da Rimini* (debut, 1983), *Il Trovatore* (1987), and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1998).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Received an Academy Award for her costumes for the motion picture *Cyrano de Bergerac* and has designed costumes for *Un Ballo in Maschera* for St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, the Broadway production of *Can-Can*, and numerous ballet productions, most notably for the Paris Opera Ballet and London's Royal Ballet.



## Duane Schuler

LIGHTING DESIGNER (ELKHART LAKE, WISCONSIN)

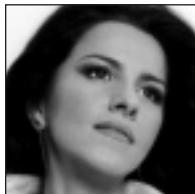
THIS SEASON *Thaïs* and *La Rondine* at the Met.

MET APPEARANCES Has designed lighting for 21 productions with the company, including *The First Emperor*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *La Traviata*, *Fidelio*, *Samson et Dalila*, and *Andrea Chénier*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent projects include *Boris Godunov* and *La Bohème* for the San Francisco Opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Falstaff* for the Santa Fe Opera, *Benvenuto Cellini* for the Salzburg Festival, *Tannhäuser* in Baden Baden, and *The Pearl Fishers* for the Lyric

## The Cast and Creative Team *continued*

Opera of Chicago. His work has also been seen at Covent Garden, La Scala, Barcelona's Liceu, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin (*Unter den Linden*), American Ballet Theatre, Stuttgart Ballet, Goodman Theatre, and Manhattan Theatre Club. Upcoming projects include *La Fanciulla del West* for the Netherlands Opera, *Lulu* in Lyon, and the world premiere of Daron Hagen's *Amelia* for the Seattle Opera. He is a founding partner of the theater planning and architectural lighting design firm Schuler Shook, with offices in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Dallas.



**Angela Gheorghiu**  
SOPRANO (ADJUD, ROMANIA)

**THIS SEASON** Magda in *La Rondine* and Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* at the Met, Marguerite in *Faust* with the Vienna State Opera, Mimì in *La Bohème* with the San Francisco Opera, Violetta in *La Traviata* with Munich's Bavarian State Opera, and Suzel in Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*, Violetta, and Tosca with the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

**MET APPEARANCES** Amelia Grimaldi in *Simon Boccanegra*, Violetta, Mimì (debut, 1993), Liù in *Turandot*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Juliette, and Marguerite.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** She made her international debut in 1992 at Covent Garden, and has since returned to that house as Violetta, Marguerite, Tosca, Mimì, Amelia, Magda, and Nedda in *Pagliacci*. She has also sung Juliette at the Arena di Verona, Salzburg Festival, and in Orange; Marguerite in Monte Carlo; Fanny in the world premiere of Vladimir Cosma's *Marius et Fanny* in Marseille; and Magda with the San Francisco Opera. She has appeared in film versions of both *Tosca* and *Roméo et Juliette*.



**Lisette Oropesa**  
SOPRANO (NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA)

**THIS SEASON** Lisette in *La Rondine*, Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*, and the Woodbird in *Siegfried* at the Met; Gilda in *Rigoletto* for her debut with the Arizona Opera; and the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Baton Rouge's Opéra Louisiane.

**MET APPEARANCES** Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Priestess in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Dew Fairy in *Hansel and Gretel*, the Madrigal Singer in *Manon Lescaut*, Cretan Woman in *Idomeneo* (debut, 2006), and a Lay Sister in *Suor Angelica*.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** She is a graduate of Louisiana State University, where she sang many roles with the LSU Opera, including Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Susanna, Lisette,

## The Cast and Creative Team *continued*

Beth in *Little Women*, and Sophie in *Werther*. She was a 2005 winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



**Roberto Alagna**  
TENOR (CLICHY-SOUS-BOIS, FRANCE)

**THIS SEASON** Ruggero in *La Rondine*, Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Canio in *Pagliacci* at the Met; Faust with the Vienna State Opera; Andrea Chénier in Monte Carlo; Nadir in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* in Seville; and Turiddu and Canio at the Orange Festival.

**MET APPEARANCES** Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette*, Radamès in *Aida*, Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (debut, 1996), Faust, Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Don José in *Carmen*, and Werther.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Rodolfo and Werther at Turin's Teatro Regio, Manrico in *Il Trovatore* and Des Grieux in *Manon* in Paris, Canio in *Pagliacci* and Don José in Verona, and Ruggero and Faust at Covent Garden. Other notable engagements include Marius in the world premiere of Vladimir Cosma's *Marius et Fanny* in Marseilles, Rodolfo at La Scala, Roméo at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Salzburg Festival, Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra* at the Salzburg Easter Festival, the title role of *Don Carlo* in Paris and London, and Edgar in Donizetti's *Lucie de Lammermoor* in Lyon.



**Marius Brenciu**  
TENOR (BRASOV, ROMANIA)

**THIS SEASON** Prunier in *La Rondine* for his Met debut, Rodolfo in *La Bohème* for his U.S. debut in November at the San Francisco Opera, Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra* in Hamburg, and Rodolfo in Florence and Tel Aviv.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** Alfredo in *La Traviata* in Rome, Brussels, at Deutsche Oper Berlin, and at Berlin State Opera (Unter den Linden); Macduff in *Macbeth* at the Edinburgh Festival and in Amsterdam; Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Lyon and Lisbon; and Prunier at Paris's Châtelet and in Toulouse. He has also sung Lenski in *Eugene Onegin* with the Israeli Opera, Welsh National Opera, and in Lyon, Tokyo, and Lisbon; Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* in Berlin and Tel Aviv; and the title role of *Idomeneo* at the Paris Opera. He was the 2001 winner of the Cardiff "Singer of the World" contest.

## The Cast and Creative Team *continued*



**Samuel Ramey**  
BASS (COLBY, KANSAS)

**THIS SEASON** The title role of *Boris Godunov* with the San Francisco Opera, Scarpia in *Tosca* with the Vienna State Opera, Claggart in *Billy Budd* in Florence, and Rambaldo in *La Rondine* and Leporello in *Don Giovanni* at the Met.

**MET APPEARANCES** Nearly 300 Met performances of 25 roles, including the company premieres of *Rinaldo* (Argante, debut, 1984), *I Lombardi* (Pagano), and Floyd's *Susannah* (Olin Blitch). He has also sung Leporello and the title role of *Don Giovanni*, Méphistophélès in *Faust*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, the Four Villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*, and Field Marshall Kutuzov in *War and Peace*.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** Has sung his repertoire of more than 50 roles at opera houses worldwide, including Milan's La Scala, Covent Garden, the San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Houston Grand Opera, among many others.