GEORGES BIZET
LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES
The Pearl Fishers

Conductor 
Gianandrea Noseda

Production
Penny Woolcock

Set Designer 
Dick Bird

Costume Designer
Kevin Pollard

Lighting Designer
Jen Schriever

Projection Design 
59 Productions

Movement Director
Andrew Dawson

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré

Saturday, January 16, 2016
1:00–3:35 PM

New Production

The production of Les Pêcheurs de Perles was made possible by a generous gift from the Gramma Fisher Foundation, Marshalltown, Iowa

Additional funding was received from The Annenberg Foundation; Mr. William R. Miller, in memory of Irene D. Miller; and American Express

A co-production of the Metropolitan Opera and English National Opera, originally created by English National Opera

General Manager
Peter Gelb

Music Director
James Levine

Principal Conductor
Fabio Luisi

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MUSIC DIRECTOR
James Levine

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR
Fabio Luisi
The Metropolitan Opera
2015–16 SEASON

The 9th Metropolitan Opera performance of
GEORGES BIZET’S
LES PÊCHEURS DE PERLES
The Pearl Fishers

CONDUCTOR
Gianandrea Noseda

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

ZURGA, VILLAGE HEADMAN
Mariusz Kwiecien*

NADIR, A PEARL DIVER
Matthew Polenzani

LEÏLA, PRIESTESS OF BRAHMA
Diana Damrau

NOURABAD, HIGH PRIEST OF BRAHMA
Nicolas Testé

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

Saturday, January 16, 2016, 1:00–3:35PM
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Matthew Polenzani as Nadir and Diana Damrau as Leïla in Bizet’s Les Pêcheurs de Perles

* Graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program

Yamaha is the Official Piano of the Metropolitan Opera.

Latecomers will not be admitted during the performance.

Chorus Master Donald Palumbo
Musical Preparation Steven Eldredge, Denise Massé, Howard Watkins, Pierre Vallet, and Marie-France Lefebvre
Assistant Stage Directors Gina Lapinski, Stephen Pickover, and Paula Suozzi
Prompter Marie-France Lefebvre
Fight Director J. Allen Suddeth
Aerial Effects Consultant Lee Stephenson
Met Titles J. D. McClatchy
Assistant Scenic Designer Scott Laule
Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and painted in Metropolitan Opera Shops
Costumes executed by Metropolitan Opera Costume Department; additional costumes by Giuseppina Coviello, Madeleine Fry, and ENO Production Wardrobe
Wigs and Makeup executed by Metropolitan Opera Wig and Makeup Department

Les Pêcheurs de Perles is performed in the Urtext edition edited by Brad Cohen and performed by arrangement with Edition Peters Group, publisher.

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

This performance uses strobe light effects.

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

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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.
The Metropolitan Opera is pleased to salute Jaguar Manhattan in recognition of its generous support during the 2015–16 season.
Synopsis

A pearl-diving village in the Far East

Act I
As the villagers prepare for their dive, they sing of their fear of the sea. Zurga tells them they must choose a leader, and they unanimously swear loyalty to him. Nadir returns to the village after spending a year away. He and Zurga recall that their friendship was almost destroyed when they both fell in love with a Hindu priestess. Nadir swears he has kept the vow they both made to protect their friendship by staying away from her. Nourabad, the High Priest, brings a priestess to the village. She is to sing and pray all night to calm the demons of the deep and to ward off the spirits of the storm. Although she is veiled, Nadir immediately realizes she is Leïla, the priestess he still loves. Zurga, who does not recognize her, imposes an oath of obedience upon her on pain of death. Leïla is to remain veiled and pure. Her reward for keeping the divers safe from harm will be their finest pearl. Nadir, alone, reveals that he and Leïla have met illicitly and that he has followed her to the village. He listens as she begins her incantation and, unable to resist any longer, calls out to her. She breaks off, answering his love.

Intermission (AT APPROXIMATELY 1:50 PM)

Act II
Nourabad tells Leïla that the divers have returned safely and she can now sleep until morning in the temple. He stresses the importance of her vow. As proof of her ability to keep her promise she tells him how, as a little girl, she once protected a fugitive. The man she saved gave her a necklace, which she wears to this day. Alone, Leïla dreams of Nadir, who soon appears by the shrine where she sleeps, and they are reunited. As a storm breaks out, they are discovered and denounced by Nourabad, who blames them for the tempest. Zurga protects his friend from the fury of the villagers, who demand his immediate death. Nourabad tears off Leïla’s veil. Zurga finally recognizes Leïla and realizes that Nadir has betrayed their oath. He angrily demands death for the guilty couple.

Act III
The storm has died away but the village has suffered terrible damage from flooding. Zurga’s anger has passed and he sadly reflects on Nadir’s fate. Leïla intercedes for Nadir and Zurga relents, but his jealousy reawakens when he realizes how much Leïla loves his rival. He allows Nourabad to take her to be sacrificed together with Nadir. Before she leaves, she gives her special necklace to one of the young divers and asks her to give it to her mother. Zurga seizes the necklace with a cry.
The pearl fishers prepare for the ritual deaths of Leïla and Nadir at dawn. Zurga stops them with the news that the village is on fire, and the villagers flee to try and save their children. Zurga releases Nadir and Leïla and explains that he set the village alight in order to rescue them. He reveals that he was the fugitive Leïla saved many years ago. The lovers gratefully make their escape and Zurga is left to face the consequences of his actions.

—Reprinted courtesy of English National Opera
Few operas can match the sheer lyric beauty of Bizet’s youthful The Pearl Fishers. Critics at the time were not in favor of it—the composer was accused, bafflingly, of imitating both Verdi and Wagner—but the audience was swept up in the ravishing score tinged with the allure of a mythical South Asian setting. The drama itself remains within the conventional standards of the day: in ancient Ceylon, two men have their close friendship tested by their love for the same woman, who re-enters their lives as a priestess sworn to chastity. The desire for physical love eventually overcomes the girl’s vows as well as one of the men’s oaths of friendship, and the lovers are only saved from the wrath of the community by the other suitor’s act of self-sacrifice at the finale. But the somewhat formulaic plot becomes insignificant alongside the accomplishment of the score and the tantalizing musical vision of a distant land that it provides. The Pearl Fishers employs the same blend of exoticism and eroticism that would find such indelible expression in Bizet’s subsequent masterpiece, Carmen, but the sensuous scope of the music is perhaps even wider in the earlier work with its deliberately vague setting. (An early version of the libretto placed the story in Mexico, but Ceylon was eventually chosen as having even greater “exotic” possibilities.) Though not performed frequently, The Pearl Fishers successfully stands on its own when appreciated for its unique atmosphere, rather than compared to Carmen or held up to modern notions of dramatic plausibility.

The Creators
French composer Georges Bizet (1838–75) was known as a brilliant student and prodigy, but his works only found lasting success after his untimely death. His final opera, Carmen, which premiered to very mixed reactions three months before he died, became a hit shortly afterward and is acknowledged today as one of opera’s greatest achievements. Eugène Cormon (1810–1903) was the pen name of Pierre-Étienne Piêstre, a French dramatist and prolific librettist. Most of his works are forgotten today, although his play Philippe II, Roi d’Espagne served as one of the sources for Verdi’s Don Carlos. His collaborator on Les Pêcheurs de Perles was Michel Carré (1821–72), who also co-created the libretti to Gounod’s Faust and Roméo et Juliette and the play that formed the basis for Offenbach’s Les Contes d’Hoffmann.
The Setting
The opera is originally set in Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) in non-historic “ancient times,” signifying an exotic land with a mythical and romantic aura. The Met’s new production places the action in an unspecified locale in the Far East.

The Music
In addition to its striking lyrical expression, the score is filled with surprising and delightful features throughout. The important role of the chorus is evident from the opening number, with its extraordinarily beautiful middle section for men’s voices. The later “welcoming” chorus in Act I and the boisterous Act III number, bordering on a sort of bacchanal, are no less notable. The orchestral writing is equally sophisticated, especially in the subtle touches of instrumentation (which would become so marked a feature of Carmen): flute and harp to denote moments of noble religious sentiment; two piccolos evoking nighttime in the ruins of an ancient temple at the beginning of Act II; a solo oboe suggesting indigenous instruments in the same act. But the highest honors of the score must go to the remarkable solos and duets that have made the opera impossible to forget. Among these are the tenor’s Act I romance, “Je crois entendre encore,” a gorgeous melody that requires both refined delicacy of expression and extraordinary power and discipline; Leïla’s highly ornamented invocation to Siva directly after; her joyful love aria, “Comme autrefois,” in Act II; and Leïla and Nadir’s love duet in the same act, a piece as passionate as anything in Bizet. The most famous moment in the opera comes with the justly celebrated duet between the tenor and baritone, the ravishing “Au fond du temple saint” in Act I. Its abundant melody miraculously encompasses a profusion of diverse sentiment, from religious ecstasy to exalted friendship to sadness and loss.

Met History
Prior to this production, which had its Met premiere on New Year’s Eve 2015, the opera received only four performances by the company. The partial premiere took place in 1896, when the first two acts were presented in a matinee together with Massenet’s one-act La Navarraise, as a star vehicle for soprano Emma Calvé. The first complete staging was seen on opening night of the 1916–17 season, with a cast led by Frieda Hempel, Enrico Caruso, and Giuseppe De Luca. After two more performances, the opera disappeared from the repertoire, although excerpts, most notably the duet “Au fond du temple saint,” have frequently been heard in concert at the Met.
“The Orient is...one of [the West’s] deepest and most recurring images of the Other,” wrote the scholar Edward Said in his groundbreaking 1978 book *Orientalism*. “The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.”

Georges Bizet’s *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* springs from a long, prolific vein of European Orientalist music, drama, literature, and visual art. Much like Leïla, the opera’s veiled heroine, the East was portrayed in these works of art as languorous, inscrutable, submissive, primitive, impulsive, tempting, and sometimes even violent—everything that bourgeois, Christian Europe wanted to believe it was not.

Nineteenth-century Orientalism thrived nowhere more than in France. Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt from 1798 to 1801 and Charles X’s expedition against Algiers in 1830 incited a wave of Orientalism manifested over the following decades in such works as Gustave Flaubert’s novel *Salammbô*; the vivid canvases of Eastern scenes by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Léon Gérôme; and Félicien David’s seminal symphonic ode *Le Désert*, which in turn inspired a raft of Orientalist French operas including Gounod’s *La Reine de Saba*, Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila*, Delibes’s *Lakmé*, and Massenet’s *Thaïs*.

The Orientalist flavor of *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* is palpable in other Bizet operas as well, including *La Guzla de l’Émir* (1862), *La Jolie Fille de Perth* (1866), and *Djamileh* (1871). Even his masterwork *Carmen* falls under the Orientalist umbrella; “the Orient,” then, could be almost any place deemed exotic. Victor Hugo, in the preface to *Les Orientales*, defined it as “Hebraic, Turkish, Greek, Persian, Arab, even Spanish, because Spain is still the Orient.”

Bizet (1838–1875) is familiar to all operagoers as the composer of the ever-popular *Carmen*, the last work he completed before his untimely death at age 36. *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* dates from 12 years earlier, when he was fresh out of the Paris Conservatory, where he had studied composition with Jacques-Fromental Halévy, the composer of *La Juive* (whose daughter, Geneviève, he married in 1869). An even stronger musical influence during those years was Charles Gounod, the composer of *Faust*, a mentor and close friend to Bizet.

By 1863, the year in which *The Pearl Fishers* was composed, Bizet had already written six stage works, only one of which had been performed. His earliest operas, created during his student days, had been comic and largely Italianate in style, modelled upon the spirited bel canto works of Rossini and Donizetti. After Bizet’s sojourn in Italy from 1858 to 1860 as a winner of the Prix de Rome, his operas turned more serious and more French in style, displaying the influence of Gounod, Meyerbeer, and even the Parisian-flavored late middle period operas of Verdi.

In April 1863, the 25-year-old Bizet was approached by Léon Carvalho, manager of the Théâtre Lyrique, who had been offered an annual grant of 100,000 francs on the condition that he premiere a new work by a recent Prix de Rome winner each
year. Carvalho offered Bizet a libretto called *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré, an exotic drama set on the island of Ceylon (today’s Sri Lanka). One of its chief sources was a recent book, Octave Sachot’s *L’Île de Ceylan et des Curiosités Naturelles*, which included discussions of pearl fishery and the superstitions surrounding it, as well as evocative scenic descriptions. And, though clothed in Orientalist garb, the opera’s heroine, Leïla—a virgin priestess who breaks her vows for love—owes much to Julia, the leading lady in Spontini’s *La Vestale* (1807), and perhaps also to Bellini’s *Norma* (1831).

Carvalho’s commission to Bizet stipulated a planned opening night in September, obliging him to compose at lightning speed. Luckily, he had a wealth of musical “leftovers” from thwarted earlier works which he could recycle. His unperformed opera *Ivan IV* yielded music for three numbers in *The Pearl Fishers*: the orchestral prelude; part of Zurga’s Act I aria, “Une fille inconnue;” and the Act III duet “O lumière sainte.” The chorus “Brahma, divin Brahma” is drawn from an early, rejected Te Deum, and another chorus, “Ah chante, chante encore,” comes from *Don Procopio*, an early opéra-bouffe unperformed in the composer’s lifetime. Bizet completed the score of *The Pearl Fishers* by early August.

The premiere took place at the Théâtre Lyrique on September 30, 1863. When the first-night audience accorded Bizet a curtain call, the composer, unaccustomed to success, was reported by the writer Louis Gallet as appearing “a little dazed.” The opera achieved a respectable run of 18 performances, but the critical establishment did not share the audience’s enthusiasm. Benjamin Jouvin of *Le Figaro* wrote, “There were neither fishermen in the libretto nor pearls in the music.” He and other Parisian critics, accustomed to the lighter sounds of Auber and Offenbach, accused Bizet of “Wagnerism,” a charge often hurled at his robust orchestrations, which the critics found noisy and overstuffed. One of them called the opera “a fortissimo in three acts.” The disappointed Bizet described it as “an honorable, brilliant failure,” referring to it in a letter to his publisher Choudens as “*Les Pêcheurs de Crevettes*”—“The Shrimp Fishers.”

Hector Berlioz, himself a misunderstood pioneer, disagreed. In his review in *Journal des Débats*, he asserted, “The score of *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* does M. Bizet the greatest honor,” describing it as “filled with fire and rich coloring” and “ravishing originality.”

Modern critical opinion has gradually warmed to *The Pearl Fishers*, recognizing in it the melodic gifts, imaginative orchestration, and sure dramatic instincts that would fully bloom a decade later in *Carmen*. But the opera’s libretto has continued to endure scorn for its unlikely coincidences, stereotyped characterizations, and prosaic verse. Cormon, one of the librettists, himself later admitted, “Had we known of the talent of M. Bizet, we would never have given him our white elephant.” Nevertheless, their libretto can be deemed a good one in 19th-century terms: an effective scaffold for vivid, compact, fast-paced musical drama. And the music that Bizet draped on that scaffold is among the finest of French opéra lyrique, the elegant Romantic style refined to a high sheen.
by Gounod. The score’s highlights are justifiably popular: Nadir and Zurga’s stirring Act I friendship duet, “Au fond du temple saint,” whose sweeping theme becomes the opera’s main motif; Leïla’s Act II cavatina, “Comme autrefois,” whose expansive melody, triple meter, and pair of French horns foreshadow Micaëla’s aria in Carmen; and Nadir’s Act I barcarole, “Je crois entendre encore,” whose Phrygian scale and haunting English horn solo against muted strings create a strongly exotic flavor.

After its opening run, The Pearl Fishers was not performed again until 11 years after Bizet’s death and the runaway success of Carmen. In 1886, it was presented at La Scala in Italian, followed by regular stagings in European cities, also often in Italian. It did not reach Paris again until 1889. In 1893 it received its U.S. premiere in Philadelphia and in 1896, its first two acts were performed at the Met on a double bill with Massenet’s one-act opera La Navarraise. In the mid-20th century, it began to enter the opera repertory worldwide.

Unfortunately, all of these performances were based on badly corrupted editions of Bizet’s score. After his death in 1875, his widow was careless with his musical legacy, letting a number of his autograph scores go astray, including that of The Pearl Fishers. Choudens published a second piano vocal score in 1887–88 and a “nouvelle edition” in 1893, which incorporated the corruptions that had crept into recent revivals; these scores remained the basis of productions for nearly a century.

The opera’s finale, a bone of contention even before its premiere, was the most compromised portion of the corrupt editions, disfigured to provide what was thought to be a more dramatic ending—“a grand Meyerbeerian holocaust,” as Bizet biographer Winton Dean put it. In one version, a villager stabs Zurga in the back as we hear the offstage voices of Leïla and Nadir. In other versions Zurga is burned at the stake. This finale also included a trio composed by Benjamin Godard.

In the 1970s, an authentic 1863 vocal score was discovered, spurring efforts to reconstruct the score in accordance with Bizet’s intentions, and Arthur Hammond orchestrated the restored portions that existed only in the vocal score. In the 1990s, Bizet’s original 1863 six-stave short score was discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. It became the basis for the critical edition, prepared by Brad Cohen and published by Edition Peters in 2002, that is performed this season at the Met.

—Cori Ellison
The Cast and Creative Team

**Gianandrea Noseda**
CONDUCTOR (MILAN, ITALY)

**This Season** Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met; La Bohème, Rigoletto, and Il Trittico at St. Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre; Il Trovatore at Covent Garden; Lucia di Lammermoor in concert with Turin’s Teatro Regio at Paris’s Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; Norma and La Bohème with the Teatro Regio at the Savonlinna Festival; a concert with the Juilliard Orchestra; and Lucia di Lammermoor and Casella’s La Donna Serpente with the Teatro Regio in Turin.

**MET Appearances** Prince Igor, Andrea Chénier, Macbeth, La Traviata, Il Trovatore, War and Peace (debut, 2002), La Forza del Destino, and Un Ballo in Maschera.

**Career Highlights** He is music director of Turin’s Teatro Regio, principal guest conductor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, guest conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, principal conductor of the Orquestra de Cadaqués, and artistic director of Italy’s Stresa Festival. He is also conductor laureate of the BBC Philharmonic and was formerly principal guest conductor of the Mariinsky Theatre and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

**Penny Woolcock**
DIRECTOR (BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA)

**This Season** Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met.

**MET Production** Doctor Atomic (debut, 2008).

**Career Highlights** She is both a director and filmmaker working across different genres. Recent work includes Utopia, an art installation at London’s Roundhouse; 1 Day, a fiction about gang life in inner-city Birmingham; and Tina Goes Shopping, Tina Takes a Break, and Mischief Night, a trilogy about the marginal economy in Leeds. She directed Les Pêcheurs de Perles for English National Opera in 2010, and was both writer and director for the feature films Margate Exodus (2006), Mischief Night (2006), and Principals of Lust. Her work for television includes The Death of Klinghoffer (2003, adapted from John Adams’s opera), Macbeth on the Estate (1997), and The Two Marys (1993). Work in documentary film includes Going to the Dogs, One Mile Away, From Sea to the Land Beyond, On the Streets, and The Wet House.

**Dick Bird**
SET DESIGNER (LONDON, ENGLAND)

**This Season** Les Pêcheurs de Perles for his debut at the Met, The Mikado for the Scottish Opera, Summertide for the Sarasota Ballet (choreographed by Sir Peter Wright), and The Passion, based on Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, for Manchester’s Streetwise Opera.

**Career Highlights** Opera credits include La Donna del Lago (Covent Garden), From the House of the Dead (Opera North), Béatrice et Bénédict and Der Freischütz (Paris’s Opéra Comique), and The Gambler and Il Trittico (Opera Zuid). Designs for ballet include David Bintley’s Aladdin (Birmingham Royal Ballet), La Bayadère (Tokyo’s K Ballet), The
Canterville Ghost (English National Ballet), and The Firebird (National Ballet of Japan). His work in theater includes Hamlet and La Grande Magie (Comédie Française), The Comedy of Errors (Théâtre Vidy), King Lear (The Crucible), Light (Complicite), Harvest (Royal Court Theatre), The Enchanted Pig and Monkey (Young Vic), Othello and As You Like It (The Globe), and The Walls, A Prayer for Owen Meany, and The Night Season (National Theatre). He designed Kate Bush’s Before The Dawn concerts at Hammersmith Apollo in 2014 and received the UK Awards Best Design of 2015 award for The Hudsucker Proxy at the Nuffield Theatre.

Kevin Pollard
COSTUME DESIGNER (LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met.
MET PRODUCTIONS Satyagraha (debut, 2008) and The Enchanted Island.
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS In addition to his work in costume design for theater, film, and dance, he is also a set designer. Among his recent work is the multi-award winning Shockheaded Peter and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum for London’s Royal National Theatre; The Magic Flute for the Welsh National Opera; Satyagraha and Les Pêcheurs de Perles for English National Opera; The Dreadful Hours (sets and costumes) and the trilogy Tmesis, Momento Mori, and Anima (sets and costumes) for Liverpool’s Tmesis Theatre Company; L’Amour de Loin for English National Opera, Vlaamse Opera, and Canadian Opera Company; Ménage à Trois for the National Theatre of Scotland; Danny the Champion of the World (sets and costumes), Top of the World, and Beasts and Beauties (sets) for Liverpool’s Spike Theatre; Beauty and the Beast (costumes) with Improbable for the Young Vic Theatre; and Brecht and Weill’s The Threepenny Opera at the Salzburg Festival (costumes).

Jen Schriever
LIGHTING DESIGNER (NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON The new production of Les Pêcheurs de Perles and the revival of Die Fledermaus at the Met and Danai Gurira’s Eclipsed on Broadway next spring.
MET PRODUCTION Die Fledermaus (debut, 2013)
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent productions include La Traviata, Faust and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Golden Mask nominee) for St. Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre. Off-Broadway work includes Toast and A Second Chance (Public Theater), Night is a Room (Signature Theatre), I’m Looking for Helen Twelvevetrees (Abrons Arts Center), Bright Half Life (Women’s Project), Mala Hierba, and American Hero (Second Stage), Sunset Baby (Labyrinth Theater Company), Triassic Parq (Soho Playhouse), Bullet for Adolf (New World Stages), Stuffed and UnStrung (Union Square Theater), and An Evening Without Monty Python (Town Hall). She has also worked with regional theaters including the Goodman, Berkeley Rep, South Coast Rep, Goodspeed, Woolly Mammoth, Signature, Papermill, CenterStage, Folger, and Williamstown. She is an adjunct professor at Purchase College.
The Cast and Creative Team CONTINUED

59 Productions
PROJECTION DESIGN

THIS SEASON  Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met.
MET PRODUCTIONS  The Enchanted Island, Two Boys, Satyagraha (debut, 2008), Doctor Atomic, and the 125th Anniversary Gala.
COMPANY HIGHLIGHTS  59 Productions creates and integrates animation, film, and video into live performance and real-world environments. Recent designs for opera include Haas’s Morgen und Abend, Eugene Onegin, and Birtwistle’s The Minotaur (Covent Garden), Luigi Nono’s Al Gran Sole Carico d’Amore (Deutsche Oper Berlin and the Salzburg Festival), and Two Boys, Satyagraha, Idomeneo, Messiah, Doctor Atomic, Dr Dee, and After Dido (English National Opera). Ballet designs include Ceremony of Innocence, Invitus Invitam, and La Bayadère (London’s Royal Ballet). Video design for theater includes An American in Paris, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, and Big Fish (Broadway), Wonder.land (Manchester International Festival, National Theatre), The Forbidden Zone (Salzburg Festival, Schaubühne Berlin), Great Britain and Emil and the Detectives (National Theatre), War Horse (Lincoln Center, National Theatre, and worldwide tours), and Les Misérables (World Tour). Exhibition and events include the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony in London, Hampton Court 500 Rewind (Historic Royal Palaces), David Bowie Is and Shakespeare: Greatest Living Playwright (Victoria and Albert Museum), Lighting the Sails of Sydney Opera House (Vivid LIVE), and Harmonium Project (Edinburgh Festival).

Andrew Dawson
CHOREOGRAPHER (LONDON, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON  Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met.
MET PRODUCTION  Doctor Atomic (debut, 2008).
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS  A theater director and performer, he studied dance in New York with Merce Cunningham; theater in Paris with Philippe Gaulier, Monika Pagneux, and Jacques Lecoq; and the Feldenkrais method. He was movement director for the recent production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream at Bristol Old Vic (with later tours to Washington, D.C. and Seoul) and choreographed Les Pêcheurs de Perles for English National Opera in 2010. Pieces he has created and performed include Space Panorama in 1987 (the story of the Apollo 11 moon landing told using only his hands) and his solo show Absence and Presence in 2005. He was one of the lead puppeteers in the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics in London. With an arts award from Wellcome Trust in 2011 he created The Articulate Hand, which premiered that year at New York’s World Science Festival and was featured at TEDMED in San Diego. In 2013 he created Ring Hands on a commission from London’s Royal Opera House, in which he told the story of Wagner’s Ring cycle in 30 minutes using only his hands.
Diana Damrau
SOPRANO (GÜNzburg, Germany)

This season Leïla in Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met, the title role of Manon at the Vienna State Opera, Elvira in I Puritani in Madrid, Violetta in La Traviata at the Orange Festival, and the title role of Lucia di Lammermoor at Covent Garden, Turin’s Teatro Regio, and with the Teatro Regio on tour in Paris and Essen.

Met Appearances Amina in La Sonnambula, Gilda in Rigoletto, Rosina in Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Adèle in Le Comte Ory, Marie in La Fille du Régiment, Pamina and the Queen of the Night in Die Zauberflöte, Zerbinetta in Ariadne auf Naxos (debut, 2005), Aithra in Die Ägyptische Helena, Konstanze in Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Adina in L’Elisir d’Amore, Violetta, Manon, and Lucia di Lammermoor.

Career Highlights Recent performances include Leïla at Vienna’s Theater an der Wien, Lucia di Lammermoor at La Scala and Munich’s Bavarian State Opera, the title role in Iain Bell’s A Harlot’s Progress at Vienna’s Theater an der Wien, and Violetta at La Scala, the Paris Opera, and Covent Garden. She has also sung Philine in Thomas’s Mignon in Geneva, and Lucia di Lammermoor at the Vienna State Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Mariusz Kwiecien
BARITONE (KRAKÓW, POLAND)

This season Zurga in Les Pêcheurs de Perles and the Duke of Nottingham in Roberto Devereux at the Met, the title role of Don Giovanni at the Vienna State Opera, Rodrigo in Don Carlo with the San Francisco Opera, and the title role of Szymanowski’s King Roger at Poland’s Kraków Opera.

Met Appearances Seventeen roles including Count Almaviva in Le Nozze di Figaro, Marcello in La Bohème, the title role of Eugene Onegin, Riccardo in I Puritani, Belcore in L’Elisir d’Amore, Don Giovanni, Enrico in Lucia di Lammermoor, Guglielmo in Così fan tutte, Escamillo in Carmen, and Kuligin in Kát’a Kabanová (debut, 1999).

Career Highlights He has recently sung Don Giovanni at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dr. Malatesta in Don Pasquale in Barcelona, and Eugene Onegin with Munich’s Bavarian State Opera. Additional engagements include Riccardo with the Paris Opera; Rodrigo at Covent Garden; Don Giovanni at Covent Garden, the San Francisco Opera, Seattle Opera, and in Munich and Santa Fe; Eugene Onegin with the Bolshoi Theatre, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Vienna State Opera; and Count Almaviva at Covent Garden and in Munich, Chicago, and Madrid.
Matthew Polenzani  
TENOR (EVANSTON, ILLINOIS)

This season Nadir in Les Pêcheurs de Perles and the title role of Roberto Devereux at the Met, Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni at the Paris Opera, the title role of Werther at the Vienna State Opera and Munich’s Bavarian State Opera, and Rodolfo in La Bohème for his debut at Barcelona’s Liceu.

Met Appearances  More than 300 performances of 34 roles including Hoffmann in Les Contes d’Hoffmann, Ferrando in Così fan tutte, the Duke in Rigoletto, Ernesto in Don Pasquale, Belmonte in Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Count Almaviva in Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Chevalier de la Force in Dialogues des Carmélites, Boyar Khrushchov in Boris Godunov (debut, 1997), Tamino in Die Zauberflöte, and Alfredo in La Traviata.

Career Highlights  He has recently sung the title role of Idomeneo at Covent Garden, Alfredo for his debut in Zurich, and Nemorino in L’Elisir d’Amore and Tamino at Munich’s Bayerische Staatsoper. He was the recipient of the Met’s 2008 Beverly Sills Artist Award, established by Agnes Varis and Karl Leichtman.

Nicolas Testé  
BASS-BARITONE (PARIS, FRANCE)

This season Nourabad in Les Pêcheurs de Perles at the Met, Giorgio in I Puritani in Madrid, Dr. Grenvil in La Traviata at the Orange Festival, and Raimondo in Lucia di Lammermoor with the San Francisco Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Paris’s Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Turin’s Teatro Regio.

Met Appearances  Count des Grieux in Manon and Colline in La Bohème (debut, 2014).

Career Highlights  He has recently sung Nourabad at Vienna’s Theater an der Wien and in Valencia, Claudius in Hamlet in Avignon, Ferrando in Il Trovatore at the Orange Festival, and Colline at Munich’s Bavarian State Opera. He has also sung Giorgio at the Paris Opera, the Coach Driver/Officer/Jailer in the world premiere of Iain Bell’s A Harlot’s Progress and Jupiter in Rameau’s Castor et Pollux at the Theater an der Wien, the title role of Le Nozze di Figaro in Warsaw, Hermann and Schlémil in Les Contes d’Hoffmann at La Scala, Nourabad at Paris’s Opéra Comique, and Pantheus in Les Troyens, Agamemnon in Iphigénie en Aulide, and Frère Laurent in Roméo et Juliette in Amsterdam.