

Gaetano Donizetti

Don Pasquale

CONDUCTOR
James Levine

PRODUCTION
Otto Schenk

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER
Rolf Langenfass

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Duane Schuler

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR
James Levine

Dramma buffo in three acts

Libretto by Giovanni Ruffini and the composer

Saturday, November 13, 2010, 1:00–3:45 pm

This production of *Don Pasquale* was made possible by a generous gift from **The Sybil B. Harrington Endowment Fund.**

The revival of this production was made possible by a gift from The Dr. M. Lee Pearce Foundation.

The Metropolitan Opera
2010–11 Season

The 129th Metropolitan Opera performance of
Gaetano Donizetti's

Don Pasquale

Conductor
James Levine

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Don Pasquale, an elderly bachelor
John Del Carlo

Dr. Malatesta, his physician
Mariusz Kwiecien*

Ernesto, Pasquale's nephew
Matthew Polenzani

Norina, a youthful widow, beloved of Ernesto
Anna Netrebko

A Notary, Malatesta's cousin Carlino
Bernard Fitch

Saturday, November 13, 2010, 1:00–3:45 pm

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Mariusz Kwiecien as Dr. Malatesta and Anna Netrebko as Norina in a scene from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*

Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**
Musical Preparation **Denise Massé, Joseph Colaneri, Carrie-Ann Matheson, Carol Isaac, and Hemdi Kfir**
Assistant Stage Directors **J. Knighten Smit and Kathleen Smith Belcher**
Prompter **Carrie-Ann Matheson**
Met Titles **Sonya Friedman**
Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and painted in **Metropolitan Opera Shops**
Costumes executed by **Metropolitan Opera Costume Department**
Wigs by **Metropolitan Opera Wig Department**
Assistant to the costume designer **Philip Heckman**

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

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* Graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program

Yamaha is the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera.

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What's on Stage

A new production of *Don Carlo* opens in November with Roberto Alagna in the title role of Verdi's most ambitious opera. Elina Garanča reprises her sensational performance in the title role of *Carmen*. *La Fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*) returns to the Met 100 years after its Met world premiere, starring Deborah Voigt and Marcello Giordani. Simon Rattle makes his Met debut conducting Debussy's impressionistic masterpiece, *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Bizet

CARMEN

NOV 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 27 mat, 30 DEC 4, 9

Verdi

DON CARLO

NEW PRODUCTION

NOV 22, 26, 29 DEC 3, 7, 11 mat, 15, 18 mat

Puccini

LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST

DEC 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 27, 30 JAN 3, 8 mat

Debussy

PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

DEC 17, 20, 23, 29 JAN 1 mat

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Synopsis

Rome, mid-19th century

Act I

SCENE 1 Don Pasquale's house

SCENE 2 Norina's Terrace

Act II

Don Pasquale's house

Intermission

Act III

SCENE 1 Don Pasquale's house

SCENE 2 Don Pasquale's garden

Act I

The old bachelor Don Pasquale plans to marry in order to punish his rebellious nephew, Ernesto, who is in love with the young widow Norina. Pasquale wants an heir so he can cut the young man off without a penny. He consults Dr. Malatesta, who suggests as a bride his own beautiful younger sister ("Bella siccome un angelo"). Feeling his youth returning, the delighted Pasquale tells Malatesta to arrange a meeting at once. Ernesto enters and again refuses to marry a woman of his uncle's choice. Pasquale tells him that he will have to leave the house, then announces his own marriage plans to his astonished nephew. With no inheritance, Ernesto sees his dreams evaporating. To make matters worse, he learns that his friend Malatesta has arranged Pasquale's marriage.

On her terrace, Norina laughs over a silly romantic story she's reading. She is certain of her own ability to charm a man ("Quel guardo il cavaliere"). Malatesta arrives. He is in fact plotting on her and Ernesto's behalf and explains his plan: Norina is to impersonate his (nonexistent) sister, marry Pasquale in a mock ceremony, and drive him to such desperation that he will be at their mercy. Norina is eager to play the role if it will help her win Ernesto (Duet: "Pronta io son").

Act II

Ernesto, who knows nothing of Malatesta's scheme, laments the loss of Norina, imagining his future as an exile ("Cercherò lontana terra"). He leaves when Pasquale appears, who is impatient to meet his bride-to-be. Enchanted when Malatesta introduces the timid "Sofronia," the old man decides to get married at once. During the wedding ceremony, Ernesto bursts in and accuses Norina

of faithlessness. Malatesta quickly whispers an explanation and Ernesto plays witness to the wedding contract. As soon as the document is sealed and Pasquale has signed over his fortune to his bride, Norina changes her act from demure girl to willful shrew. The shocked Pasquale protests, while Norina, Ernesto, and Malatesta enjoy their success (Quartet: “È rimasto là impietrato”).

Act III

Pasquale’s new “wife” has continued her extravagant ways and amassed a stack of bills. When servants arrive carrying more purchases, Pasquale furiously resolves to assert his rights as husband. Norina enters, dressed elegantly for the theater, and gives him a slap when he tries to bar her way. He threatens her with divorce, while she, in an aside, expresses sympathy for the old man’s pain (Duet: “Signorina, in tanta fretta”). As she leaves, she drops a letter implying that she has a rendezvous with an unknown suitor in the garden that night. The desperate Pasquale sends for Malatesta and leaves the servants to comment on working in a household fraught with such confusion. Malatesta then tells Ernesto to make sure that Pasquale will not recognize him when he plays his part in the garden that evening. Alone with Pasquale, Malatesta assures him they will trap “Sofronia” in a compromising situation (Duet: “Cheti, cheti, imminente”). Pasquale agrees to leave everything to Malatesta.

In the garden, Ernesto serenades Norina, who responds rapturously (Duet: “Tornami a dir che m’ami”). They are interrupted by Pasquale and Malatesta—too late to catch the young man, who slips into the house while “Sofronia” plays the innocent wife. Malatesta announces that Ernesto is about to introduce his own bride, Norina, into the house. “Sofronia” protests she will never share the roof with another woman and threatens to leave. Pasquale can hardly contain his joy and grants permission for Ernesto to marry Norina, with his inheritance. When Sofronia turns out to be Norina, Pasquale accepts the situation with good humor, gives the couple his blessing, and joins in observing that marriage is not for an old man (Finale: “La morale in tutto questo”).



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Gaetano Donizetti

Don Pasquale

Premiere: Paris, Théâtre Italien, 1843

Don Pasquale is the final comic opera by the prolific Donizetti and one of the last works he wrote. The story revolves around a classic comedic premise: a young couple in love schemes to thwart the inappropriate plans of a pompous old man, who wants to marry the girl himself. To accomplish their goal, they have help from a smart tactician. Needless to say, young love will triumph in the end over senescent foolishness and hypocrisy: all will be reconciled and live happily ever after. The tension lies in the means to the presupposed end. The same format has served comedy from the Romans to the sitcoms of our own time and was especially useful in opera (in Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail* and especially Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*). What makes *Don Pasquale* notable within this genre is its emphasis on genuine human emotion. The cathartic moment in *Don Pasquale*—when the players stop to wonder if they have gone too far, even if their original plan was to expose folly and sanctimony—is as “real” and as startling as anything in opera. It is also strikingly democratic: the familiar model of the good, young people arrayed against the mean old man is subverted. Even the good guys have the capacity to be cruel if they do not control themselves. Donizetti tells this story with a score that is graceful and effervescent, as one would expect from this master of melody, with an additional level of sophistication to match the comic (yet insightful) proceedings.

The Creators

Bergamo-born Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) completed 65 operas (he left a number of unfinished ones) and also wrote orchestral and chamber music in a career abbreviated by mental illness and premature death. Apart from this opera, the ever-popular *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and the comic gem *L'Elisir d'Amore*, most of his works disappeared from public view after his death. But critical and popular opinion of his huge opus has grown considerably over the past 50 years. The libretto was written by Giovanni Ruffini (1807–1881), a Genoese poet and patriot who was living in exile in Paris. Donizetti altered his text to such an extent that Ruffini refused to have it published under his own name. There is no evidence of him working in the theater again.

The Setting

The action unfolds in Rome. Donizetti had originally wanted the opera set in his contemporary era, but conventions of the time required it to be set in the past. The current production places the action in Donizetti's time, the early 19th century.

The Music

The orchestration is generally light by modern standards, with a clear emphasis on the vocalism. At the time of the premiere, however, audiences would not have regarded it as light by comic opera standards: the recitatives are all accompanied by the orchestra rather than by a harpsichord (which was the more common practice at the time). The effect is a subtler distinction between “dialogue” and arias and other set pieces. In general, the solos in *Don Pasquale* are not as familiar as their counterparts from some of Donizetti’s other operas, but they are excellent indicators of character and motivation. The aria with which the heroine introduces herself to the audience, “Quel guardo il cavaliere,” is highly demanding vocally but makes a more nuanced impression than the typical showstopper of the bel canto genre: its point is to communicate the character’s high spirits and quick wit. The tenor’s Act III folk-influenced serenade perfectly expresses the forthright innocence suggested by his name, Ernesto. The baritone–bass duet in Act III also makes extreme demands on the singers: there are few instances in Italian opera where the device of using rhythm and accelerating tempo to make a comic impression is more expertly handled.

Don Pasquale at the Met

Not much is known about the circumstances of the company premiere of *Don Pasquale*: it occurred outside of the Met, apparently in a concert format, in 1899. Diva Marcella Sembrich was matched with stars Antonio Pini-Corsi and Antonio Scotti. The same artists were featured in the 1900 house premiere, a production whose sets and costumes were lost in the San Francisco earthquake six years later when the Met toured there. The opera continued to be regularly performed with other shorter operas (*Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Hansel and Gretel*) and even ballets. A new production in 1935, performed in tandem with Pergolesi’s *La Serva Padrona*, featured Ezio Pinza, Lucrezia Bori, Tito Schipa, and Giuseppe de Luca. The opera was given by itself in 1940, with character bass Salvatore Baccaloni in the title role and Bidú Sayão as Norina. By 1946 *Don Pasquale* was once again sharing the bill, this time with Puccini’s *Il Tabarro*. A new production in 1955—again paired with a ballet—featured Fernando Corena, Roberta Peters, Frank Guarrera, and Cesare Valletti, with Thomas Schippers conducting in his Met debut. Tenor Luigi Alva sang 13 performances in the 1960s and ’70s. This production was replaced by John Dexter’s 1978 staging, which marked the farewell performances of Beverly Sills (she sang Norina 18 times through 1979) and also starred Gabriel Bacquier and Nicolai Gedda. Later performances included tenor Alfredo Kraus. The current production, directed by Otto Schenk and designed by Rolf Langenfass, opened in 2006 with Anna Netrebko, Juan Diego Flórez, Simone Alaimo, and Mariusz Kwiecien in the leading roles.

Program Note

In the musical-theatrical center of Paris several streets are fittingly named after famous composers and librettists: the Rue Favart, Rue Scribe, Rue Auber, and Rue Méhul, among others. The Opéra, or Salle Garnier, is the district's crown jewel, and in the Rue Favart stands the splendid Opéra Comique, or Salle Favart. In the Rue Méhul stood the elegant, domed Salle Ventadour that was opened in 1829 by the troupe of the Opéra Comique, but just three years later, with the theater a million francs in debt, the company moved elsewhere. The Ventadour became the Théâtre Nautique, which was devoted to watery pantomimes and naval reenactments. They were soon supplanted by a combination of acting companies and Italian opera, including the Paris premieres of major works by Donizetti, Rossini, and Verdi. This operatic glory came to an end in 1878 when the theater was transformed into a bank.

One of the great creations of the Ventadour's period as the Théâtre Italien was the first production in 1843 of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, opera buffa par excellence. Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848), son of a poor pawnshop manager from Bergamo, had risen to the pinnacle of European operatic success. He created a number of stage works early in his composing career, such as *Le Nozze in Villa* (1820), but his reputation was made a decade later by *Anna Bolena*, his 31st opera, and the flood of successes—dramatic, historical, and comic—that followed at Italy's principal houses: *L'Elisir d'Amore* (1832), *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), *Maria Stuarda* (1835), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), *Il Campanello di Notte* (1836), and *Roberto Devereux* (1837).

Donizetti's center of activity had been Naples, where he was also the director of the royal theaters, but in 1838 he moved to Paris. The French capital was already Rossini's base, and both he and Donizetti would compose to French and Italian libretti. For the Opéra Comique, Donizetti wrote *La Fille du Régiment* in 1840. It was an enormous hit, amassing more than 1,000 performances before World War I. *Don Pasquale* was his final success, but with fewer performances at the Italien; early Parisian audiences could also hear the work in French. Just three operas followed in 1843, after which the composer suffered a tragic decline in health due to syphilis. He died in Bergamo, in 1848, at the age of 51.

Several of the composer's 65 completed operas, including *Don Pasquale*, remained tremendously popular through the 19th and 20th centuries as part of the standard Italian repertoire worldwide. Their vitality as vocal extravaganzas for outstanding singers preceded the bel canto renaissance that began in the 1950s, but this period would produce performances and recordings of many of the more obscure Donizetti titles for grateful singers and audiences.

If *La Fille du Régiment* was specifically tailored to the requirements of the French opéra-comique style, *Don Pasquale's* roots were thoroughly Italian. Its modernized commedia dell'arte characters—the fat, pompous guardian, the scheming young ward and her sentimental lover, the incompetent notary, all

cherished by the French—ultimately go back to the Roman comedies of Plautus.

The immediate source was a successful Italian opera buffa, with music by Stefano Pavesi and a libretto by Angelo Anelli, entitled *Ser Marcantonio*. First produced at La Scala in 1810, it was later heard in Paris. Commissioned by the Théâtre Italien for a new comic opera, Donizetti turned to Giovanni Ruffini, an Italian nationalist writer exiled in Paris, to adapt the earlier libretto. This sort of borrowing was still rampant before the copyright era.

Donizetti, as usual, worked at lightning speed; Ruffini could barely supply the words fast enough. The composer had to step in with major text changes and supplements, so many that Ruffini declined to accept authorship in the printed libretto. A certain “M.A.” is listed as the librettist—“Maestro Anonimo,” that is.

Donizetti claimed to have completed the score in 11 days, but this does not count the days he spent orchestrating it. Also slowing down the composition was the jealousy between the singers Antonio Tamburini (Malatesta) and Luigi Lablache (Don Pasquale) over the flashiness of their respective parts. There was presumably less friction between the original-cast lovers Giulia Grisi (Norina) and Giovanni Matteo Mario (Ernesto)—the two would become husband and wife in real life. And there was another family connection: Lablache’s son Federico played the Notary.

Donizetti did reuse some older compositions, but *Don Pasquale* was novel in having its recitative sections accompanied by strings rather than by a harpsichord. The bubbly, conversational flow of the musical action is occasionally interrupted by vocal set pieces, which are all the more striking when they occur, such as Norina’s Act I reading of a courtly novel, or Ernesto’s melting serenade in Act III, daringly delivered off-stage with an accompaniment in the Roman style—guitars, drum, and chorus la-las.

Just as fascinating are the abundance of delightful ensembles, from the Act I duet in which Doctor Malatesta instructs Norina on how she should seduce Don Pasquale, to the rather 18th-century “moral” finale, in waltz time. Exasperated, pattery exchanges between Pasquale and his antagonists are balanced by touching moments when Donizetti allows us pity for the foolish old man’s plight. And throughout the opera are piquant little examples of melody and orchestration that lift the heart, as in the trumpet solo that begins Act II, or in Ernesto’s earlier, short but glorious confession of love, “Amo Norina, la mia fed’è impegnata,” or his rueful one-line aside that follows, “Ci voleva questa mania.”

Don Pasquale opened at the Théâtre Italien on January 3, 1843, a day after Wagner’s *Der Fliegende Holländer* had its first night in Dresden. (Another notable premiere that year was Verdi’s *Ernani*.) Donizetti enjoyed a personal and financial triumph from performance royalties and sales of the vocal score

and arrangements of the opera's melodies. Rather appropriately, the score was dedicated to the wife of Donizetti's Paris banker.

Also acclaimed were the singers, especially the rotund Irish-French bass Lablache in the title role. The critic Henry Chorley called him "the most remarkable man whom I have ever seen in opera," a "richly toned and suave" singer giving a performance that avoided any hint of "grossness or coarse imitation." Lablache, with Tamburini and Grisi, had already created Bellini's *I Puritani* at the same theater in 1835.

Don Pasquale quickly spread throughout the operatic world, with performances in Italy, London, New Orleans, and New York. The star of the first Met production in 1900 was the Polish soprano Marcella Sembrich, for whom the company had earlier revived *La Fille du Régiment* in its original French—it had generally been performed in Italian—and who had already triumphed as Donizetti's bride of Lammermoor in the very first Met season in 1883.

—Richard Traubner



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Bryn Terfel as Wotan

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The Cast



James Levine

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR (CINCINNATI, OHIO)

MET HISTORY Since his 1971 company debut leading *Tosca*, he has conducted nearly 2,500 operatic performances at the Met—more than any other conductor in the company's history. Of the 83 operas he has led here, 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 40th anniversary season at the Met, he conducts the opening night new production premiere of *Das Rheingold*, the new production in the spring of *Die Walküre*, and revivals of *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Pasquale*, *Il Trovatore*, and *Wozzeck*, as well as performances of *The Bartered Bride* at The Juilliard School and *Don Carlo* and *La Bohème* during the Met's Japan tour. He also leads the MET Orchestra and Boston Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and the MET Chamber Ensemble at Weill and Zankel Hall there. Maestro Levine returns to the Boston Symphony Orchestra for his seventh season as music director, leading the world premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's violin concerto; three of John Harbison's symphonies; Schumann and Mahler symphonies for major anniversaries of their births; and music of Wagner, Mozart, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg. He makes his debut with the Staatskapelle Berlin (Mahler's Sixth Symphony) in May before taking the Met company on tour to Japan for the fifth time, where he will celebrate the 40th anniversary of his debut on June 5 in Nagoya with *Don Carlo*.



Anna Netrebko

SOPRANO (KRASNODAR, RUSSIA)

THIS SEASON Norina in *Don Pasquale* at the Met and Mimi in *La Bohème* with the company on tour in Japan, Massenet's *Manon* with London's Royal Opera on tour in Japan, Anna Bolena at the Vienna State Opera, Mimi for her debut in Copenhagen, and Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with Munich's Bavarian State Opera.

MET APPEARANCES Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, Lucia di Lammermoor, Natasha in *War and Peace* (debut, 2002), Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Musetta in *La Bohème*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Elvira in *I Puritani*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Violetta in *La Traviata* at the Salzburg Festival, Vienna State Opera, and Bavarian State Opera; Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Salzburg Festival; Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Susanna, and Gilda with Washington National Opera; Lucia and Juliette with Los Angeles Opera; Mimi, Manon, and Micaëla in *Carmen* with the Vienna State Opera; and numerous roles with St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre since her company debut in 1994.



John Del Carlo

BASS-BARITONE (SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA)

THIS SEASON Don Pasquale at the Met, Mr. Scattergood in Menotti's *The Last Savage* for his Santa Fe Opera debut, and Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the San Francisco Opera and in concert with the Saito Kinen Orchestra at Carnegie Hall and in Paris and Japan.

MET APPEARANCES The Speaker in *The Magic Flute*, the Prince in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, the Sacristan in *Tosca*, Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Kothner in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (debut, 1993), Mathieu in *Andrea Chénier*, Swallow in *Peter Grimes*, Alfieri in Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge*, Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Baron Zeta in *The Merry Widow*, and Balducci in *Benvenuto Cellini*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Among his many roles with the San Francisco Opera are Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Alidoro in *La Cenerentola*, General Boom in Offenbach's *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, and Falstaff. He has also appeared with the Paris Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Covent Garden, Houston Grand Opera, and the Aix-en-Provence Festival.



Mariusz Kwiecien

BARITONE (KRAKÓW, POLAND)

THIS SEASON Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* at the Met and Marcello in *La Bohème* on tour with the company in Japan, the title roles of *Eugene Onegin* and Szymanowski's *King Roger* in Madrid, Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Seiji Ozawa in Japan and at Carnegie Hall, and Eugene Onegin in Kraków.

MET APPEARANCES Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Kuligin in *Káťa Kabanová* (debut, 1999), Silvio in *Pagliacci*, Haly in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, and Count Almaviva.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Don Giovanni at the Vienna State Opera, Covent Garden, Bavarian State Opera, San Francisco Opera, Seattle Opera, and Santa Fe Opera; Eugene Onegin in Munich, Moscow, Warsaw, and Chicago; Count Almaviva at Covent Garden and in Munich, Chicago, Madrid, and Glyndebourne; and King Roger with the Paris Opera.



Matthew Polenzani

TENOR (EVANSTON, ILLINOIS)

THIS SEASON Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* and Alfredo in *La Traviata* at the Met, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* with the Paris Opera, Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* in Munich, and Des Grieux in *Manon* with London's Royal Opera on tour in Japan.

MET APPEARANCES More than 200 performances of 29 roles, including Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Roméo, Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Iopas in *Les Troyens*, Chevalier de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Lindoro in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, and Boyar Khrushchov in *Boris Godunov* (debut, 1997).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Idomeneo in Turin, Tamino with the Vienna State Opera and Los Angeles Opera, Belmonte and Roméo at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Duke in *Rigoletto* in Philadelphia, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Vienna and at Paris's Bastille Opera, Nemorino and Don Ottavio in Vienna and Salzburg, Ferrando at Covent Garden, and Achille in *Iphigénie en Aulide* in Florence. Recipient of the 2007–08 Beverly Sills Award.