CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK

ORFEO ED EURIDICE

CONDUCTOR
J. David Jackson

PRODUCTION
Mark Morris

SET DESIGNER
Allen Moyer

COSTUME DESIGNER
Isaac Mizrahi

LIGHTING DESIGNER
James F. Ingalls

CHOREOGRAPHER
Mark Morris

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Ranieri de' Calzabigi

Wednesday, June 5, 2024
8:00–9:40PM

The production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* was made possible by a generous gift from **Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer J. Thomas, Jr.**

The revival of this production is made possible by a gift from Douglas Dockery Thomas

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GENERAL MANAGER
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MUSIC DIRECTOR
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

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The Metropolitan Opera

2023–24 SEASON

The 112th Metropolitan Opera performance of

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK'S

ORFEO ED EURIDICE

CONDUCTOR
J. David Jackson

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

ORFEO
Anthony Roth Costanzo

AMORE
Elena Villalón

EURIDICE
Ying Fang*

HARPSICHORD
Jonathan C. Kelly

Orfeo ed Euridice is performed without intermission.

Wednesday, June 5, 2024, 8:00–9:40PM

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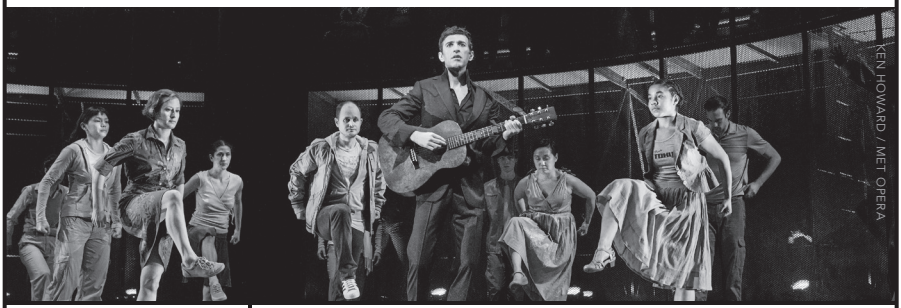
in grateful recognition of her generosity to the Metropolitan Opera
as a member of the Golden Horseshoe.


KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

Anthony Roth Costanzo as Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*

C. Graham Berwind, III Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**
Musical Preparation **J. David Jackson**, **Carol Isaac**, and **Jonathan C. Kelly**
Assistant Stage Directors **Gina Lapinski** and **Stephen Pickover**
Associate Costume Designer **Courtney Logan**
Assistant Choreographer **Sam Black**
Stage Band Conductor **Joseph Lawson**
Italian Diction Coach **Hemdi Kfir**
Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and painted in **Metropolitan Opera Shops**
Costumes executed by **Metropolitan Opera Costume Department**
Wigs and makeup constructed and executed by **Metropolitan Opera Wig and Makeup Department**

Orfeo ed Euridice is performed in the Vienna version, 1762, edited for the Gluck Complete Works (Gluck-Gesamtausgabe) by Anna Amalie Abert and Ludwig Finscher; used by arrangement with European American Music Distributors Company, U.S. and Canadian agent for Bärenreiter-Verlag, publisher and copyright owner.

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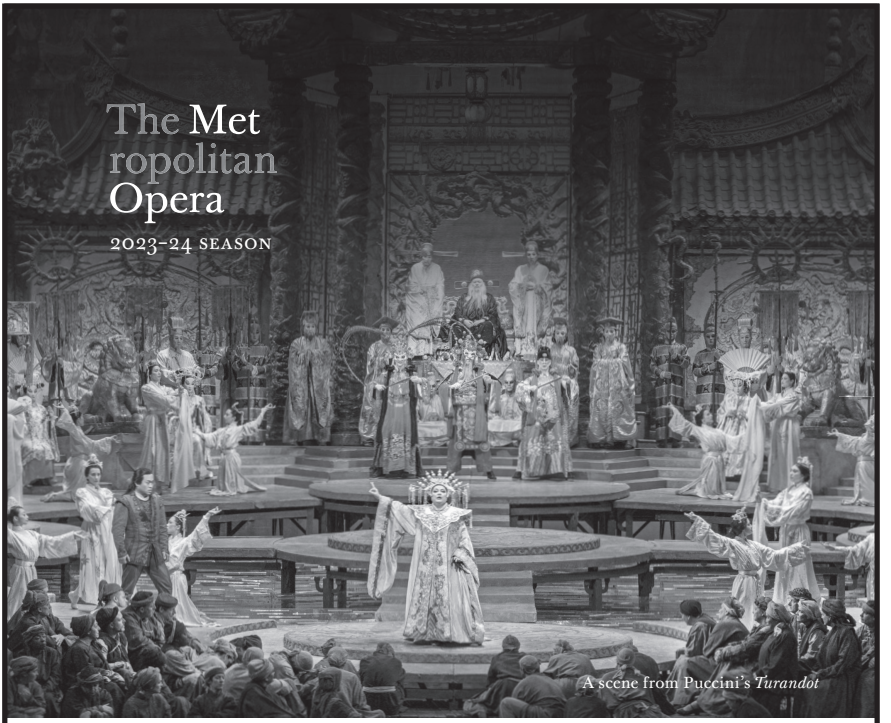

A scene from Puccini's *Turandot*

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Synopsis

Act I

Mythical times. At a lonely grave, nymphs and shepherds lament the death of Euridice, who was bitten by a snake. Left alone, Orfeo, Euridice's husband, adds his voice to the rites. Only Echo replies. Orfeo vows to rescue Euridice from the underworld.

Amore, god of love, appears with word that Jove, pitying Orfeo, will allow him to descend into the land of the dead to retrieve Euridice. To make this trial more difficult, Orfeo must neither look at Euridice nor explain why looking is forbidden. Otherwise, he will lose her forever. Orfeo agrees and begins his voyage.

Act II

At the Gates of Hades, the Furies try to deny Orfeo's passage to the underworld. His lament softens and placates them. He is eventually allowed to pass through to the Elysian Fields.

In Elysium, Orfeo is moved by the beauty of the landscape. Heroes and heroines bring Euridice to him. Without looking at her, he takes her away.

Act III

Orfeo leads Euridice through a dark labyrinth toward the upper world, forbidden to look at her. Euridice, confused by Orfeo's coldness, panics at the thought of a life without his love. In desperation, he turns to her, and she dies, again. Grief-stricken, Orfeo wonders how he can live without her. He decides to kill himself.

Amore appears and stays Orfeo's hand. In response to Orfeo's deep love and devotion, Amore revives Euridice for the second time. The three return to Earth.

At the Temple of Love, Orfeo, Euridice, Amore, the nymphs, and the shepherds all celebrate the power of love.

Christoph Willibald Gluck

Orfeo ed Euridice

Premiere: Burgtheater, Vienna, 1762

The myth of the musician Orpheus—who travels to the underworld to retrieve his dead wife, Eurydice—probes the deepest questions of desire, grief, and the power (and limits) of art. The story is the subject of opera's oldest surviving score (Peri's *Euridice*, 1600) and of the oldest opera still being performed (Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, 1607). Gluck and his librettist turned to this legend as the basis for a work as they were developing their ideas for a new kind of opera. Disillusioned with the inflexible forms of the genre as they existed at the time, Gluck sought to reform the operatic stage with a visionary and seamless union of music, poetry, and dance. Specifically, he wanted the singers to serve the drama and not the reverse. The recent popularity of Handel's operas has shown that many operas written prior to Gluck's reforms have a power that still resonates, but there is no denying that *Orfeo ed Euridice*, with its score of transcendent and irresistible beauty, helped expand the public's idea of opera's theatrical potential. Mozart and Wagner were among the successors to Gluck who openly acknowledged their debt to his vision.

The Creators

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–87) was born in Bavaria and studied music in Milan. He joined an orchestra and learned about the art of opera production in that city, where his first operas were produced. Gluck traveled extensively throughout Europe, attracting students and disciples to his philosophy of an all-encompassing operatic-theatrical experience. After notable successes in London, Prague, Dresden, and especially Paris, Gluck had his greatest achievements in Vienna, where he died in 1787. His librettist for *Orfeo ed Euridice* was the remarkable Italian poet Ranieri de' Calzabigi (1714–95). Thanks to many years spent in Paris, he had been influenced by French drama and shared Gluck's zeal for an ideal musical theater.

The Setting

The opera is set in an idealized Greek countryside and in the mythological underworld. These settings are more conceptual than geographic, and notions of how they should appear can (and rightly do) change in every era.

The Music

Gluck consciously avoided the sheer vocal fireworks that he felt had compromised the drama of opera during the era of the castrati—male singers who had been surgically altered before puberty to preserve their high voices. Castrati dominated opera to such an extent that composers, Gluck felt, were compelled to compromise their own talents in order to display these singers' technical brilliance. He did not originally dispense with castrati, but the castrato role of Orfeo (nowadays sung by a mezzo-soprano or countertenor) impresses through musical and dramatic refinement (a "noble simplicity," in Calzabigi's words), rather than vocal pyrotechnics. This is immediately apparent in his two most notable solos, "Che puro ciel" and "Che farò senza Euridice?," heartrending arias without a single over-the-top moment. Even the dance music manages to be thoroughly convincing and subversively disturbing while retaining this notable simplicity.

Met History

Orfeo ed Euridice was presented early in the Met's history: on a single night on tour in Boston in 1885, sung in German, and for eight performances in the 1891–92 season. It appeared as the curtain-raiser for the Met premiere of *Pagliacci* on December 11, 1893. Arturo Toscanini was a great admirer of the opera and showcased it on its own, featuring the great American contralto Louise Homer as Orfeo, from 1909 to 1914. George Balanchine created a dance-intensive production in 1936 that was quickly replaced by another in 1938. Risë Stevens starred in a production in 1955 that also featured Hilde Güden and Roberta Peters, and Richard Bonynge conducted a notable production in 1970 with Grace Bumbry as Orfeo. When it was revived two seasons later, Marilyn Horne sang the role. In addition to Toscanini and Bonynge, Artur Bodanzky, Walter Damrosch, Eric Leinsdorf, Charles Mackerras, Pierre Monteux, and Bruno Walter have also led the opera with the company. The Met's current production had its premiere on May 2, 2007, with James Levine conducting, Maija Kovalevska as Euridice, Heidi Grant Murphy as Amore, and David Daniels as Orfeo—the first man to sing the role at the Met. Subsequent revivals have featured Stephanie Blythe and Jamie Barton as Orfeo; Danielle de Niese, Kate Royal, and Hei-Kyung Hong as Euridice; and Lisette Oropesa and Hera Hyesang Park as Amore.

Program Note

When Handel died in 1759, the Baroque opera-seria tradition, in which singers in splendid costumes stood in frozen poses on the stage and vied with each other to create impossibly virtuosic embellishments for their da capo arias, had predeceased him. The ideals of the French Enlightenment were sweeping Europe, and with the ascent of Christoph Willibald Gluck in Vienna, they took over the opera house as well.

Gluck was not alone in wanting to reform the stale traditions that were paralyzing opera in the middle of the 18th century. A German raised in Czech Bohemia and receiving most of his formal musical education in Italy, he was firmly established in Vienna by 1760 as an operatic composer who specialized in revising French operas for the Viennese stage. Hired by Count Giacomo Durazzo, the impresario of the city's Burgtheater, he found himself surrounded by like-minded theatrical talent. Durazzo wanted to reconcile the different qualities of French and Italian opera, and Gluck himself was eager to transfer many of the qualities he had admired in French works into Italian-language operas of his own. A significant addition to this creative brew was the writer Ranieri de' Calzabigi, who had worked in Paris and was well acquainted with the theories of Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau. The two agreed that opera needed to be reformed: purged of its Baroque excesses, especially the dominance of the music over the drama and of the singers' whims over the music. Instead, they believed that music should serve, not obscure, the words and, moreover, that drama and music should coexist in classical balance. As Gluck later wrote: "I believed that my greatest labor should be devoted to seeking a beautiful simplicity."

This goal of a beautiful simplicity was an ideal of the Enlightenment, as was a renewed fascination with the classical worlds of Greece and Rome. As commentator James Halliday has written, "opera had always sought to revive the art of the ancients—this had been the stimulus behind the earliest experiments in the genre around 1600. But now, after excavations of the ruins of the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum had begun in earnest during the 1730s and 1740s, the resurgence of interest in the classical world had a different slant."

Premiered on October 5, 1762, before Empress Maria Theresa and much of the Viennese court, Gluck's first major demonstration of his theories was *Orfeo ed Euridice,* for which Calzabigi wrote the libretto. It set the familiar story from Greek mythology of Orpheus, the greatest of all musicians, who seeks to win his recently deceased wife, Euridice, back from the underworld. So compellingly beautiful is his singing that the spirits of the underworld agree to let him take her back to the land of the living, on the condition that, until he has crossed the River Styx, he never look at or speak to her as she follows him. Of course, tormented by Euridice's pleading, Orfeo does look back, and Euridice dies again. This was the same story that had been used for the first opera ever written, Jacobo Peri's *Euridice* of 1600, and the first operatic masterpiece, Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* of 1607.

In those earlier operas, the Orpheus legend retained its tragic ending. However, because the premiere of *Orfeo ed Euridice* was to be given for the festive celebration of the Austrian emperor's name day, the occasion required a happy ending, as well as a lively, regal overture bearing little relationship to the story. Privately, Gluck revealed his strong dissatisfaction with these requirements but was forced to bow to the court's wishes.

Fulfilling Durazzo's goals and Gluck's own preferences, the score of *Orfeo* shows strong French influences. One was the French emphasis on the chorus, which here plays an equal role with the three soloists. Another was the French love of the ballet, which is reflected in the opera's many beautiful dance sequences. When Gluck created his French version of the opera in 1774 for Paris, he greatly expanded this dance component, giving the world the serenely lovely Dance of the Blessed Spirits with its jewel-like flute solo, as well as the terrifyingly dissonant Dance of the Furies to describe different moments in Orfeo's stay in Hades. Both dances are included in the Met's production, which otherwise follows the original Viennese version of 1762. The success of *Orfeo's* first production was greatly enhanced by Gaspar Angiolini's French-inspired choreography; today, Mark Morris and his dancers carry this tradition into our own time.

What were the reforms that Gluck introduced into his beautiful score, which represents a quiet yet significant revolution in the history of music? In his preface to his 1767 opera *Alceste*, Gluck explained the principles that guided both that opera and *Orfeo ed Euridice*: "In writing the music of this opera, I sought to reduce music to its true function: that of seconding poetry to strengthen the expression of feelings and the interest of situations, without interrupting the action and cooling it down with superfluous ornaments. ... Above all, it was necessary to avoid, in dialogue, a too sharp disparity between the air and the recitative, in order ... not to clumsily interrupt the movement and the heat of the scene."

One of the weaknesses of Baroque opera seria was its start-and-stop dramatic action, as the storyline was carried forward in secco recitative (that is, recitative with minimal musical interest, accompanied only by harpsichord and other continuo instruments) and constantly interrupted by lengthy da capo arias that expressed emotions. Gluck banished both forms, replacing the "dry" recitative with a richer, arioso-like recitative accompanied by full orchestra, and the repetitive da capo arias with shorter, minimally ornamented arias that were, nevertheless, lyrical and deeply expressive of the poetic texts. His aim was to create a more flexible and continuous flow of music, which kept the drama moving forward unimpeded. Another aid to dramatic continuity was the weaving together of recitative and aria into connected scenes; fine examples of this can be found in Orfeo's first aria, "Chiamo il mio ben così," as he mourns

at Euridice's grave, and in his great aria of grief "Che farò senza Euridice?" in Act III after he has lost her for the second time.

Critical to *Orfeo's* initial success was the presence of the star alto castrato Gaetano Guadagni playing the role of Orfeo. Not only a fine vocalist, Guadagni was also an outstanding actor. He had been trained in London by the famous Shakespearian actor David Garrick, who was introducing a new, more realistic style of acting to the London stage to replace the artificially bombastic style favored earlier in the century. Guadagni's gifts surely inspired Gluck's wonderful creation of his mythical protagonist.

At the opera's beginning, Orfeo is presented to us in an unusual way: not in an aria, but as a voice forlornly crying out "Euridice" three times over the mourning chorus in "Ah! se intorno a quest'urna funesta." As Halliday notes, this scene calls to mind the mournful opening of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, an extremely popular work in France at that time. "Chiamo il mio ben così" is a beautiful example of Gluck's "beautiful simplicity." It is in rondo form with a flowing refrain calling in vain to Euridice to respond, framing more dramatic recitative episodes. Gluck's orchestration throughout this opera brings new timbres to color the emotions; here, he uses sorrowing woodwinds and a new instrument, the wailing chalumeau (a clarinet with a lower extension).

In the first scene of Act II, the chorus, as the Furies of Hades, do battle with the vulnerable Orfeo, armed only with his lyre, represented by the harp (which plays a major role in this opera). Baleful-sounding cornets, rarely used in opera seria, color the orchestra accompanying the Furies, and snarling figures low in the strings mimic the roar of their fearsome dog Cerberus. These sounds form a stunning contrast to the gentle arpeggios of the harp accompanying Orfeo's persuasive lyrical entreaties begging for their compassion. Gradually, their implacable natures are soothed, and the gates of Hades are opened to him.

Next, Orfeo enters the Elysian Fields, home to the blessed heroes and heroines of the ancient world, and to his Euridice. To describe this idyllic realm full of air and light, Gluck unfurls a sequence of the opera's most beautiful music, including the Dance of the Blessed Spirits and Orfeo's ravishing aria "Che puro ciel." Here, Orfeo is accompanied by a glorious, yearning oboe solo and flutters of flute and violin birdsong.

His mission accomplished, in Act III, Orfeo begins the arduous journey with Euridice back to earth, handicapped by Amore's instructions that he must not look back at or explain the situation to his wife before he crosses the Styx. Far more dramatic than his duel with the Furies, this scene forms the crux of the opera. It opens as a recitative conversation with Orfeo urging Euridice to follow him. But everything begins to unravel—and the music to intensify—as Euridice demands explanations for his strange behavior. A lover's quarrel sparks a duet and eventually an aria for Euridice in which she angrily, then tearfully

proclaims that she would rather die than live the life Orfeo seems to be offering her. Finally, Orfeo can no longer endure this torment and turns to embrace her. Her second death leads seamlessly into the opera's most famous aria, Orfeo's "Che farò senza Euridice?" another rondo-form aria with recitative that is so heartbreakingly beautiful, it seems to demand the happy ending that Amore, the deus ex machina, promptly delivers.

—Janet E. Bedell

Janet E. Bedell is a frequent program annotator for Carnegie Hall, specializing in vocal repertoire, and for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and many other institutions.

Honoring Elaine Douvas

TATIANA DAUBEK

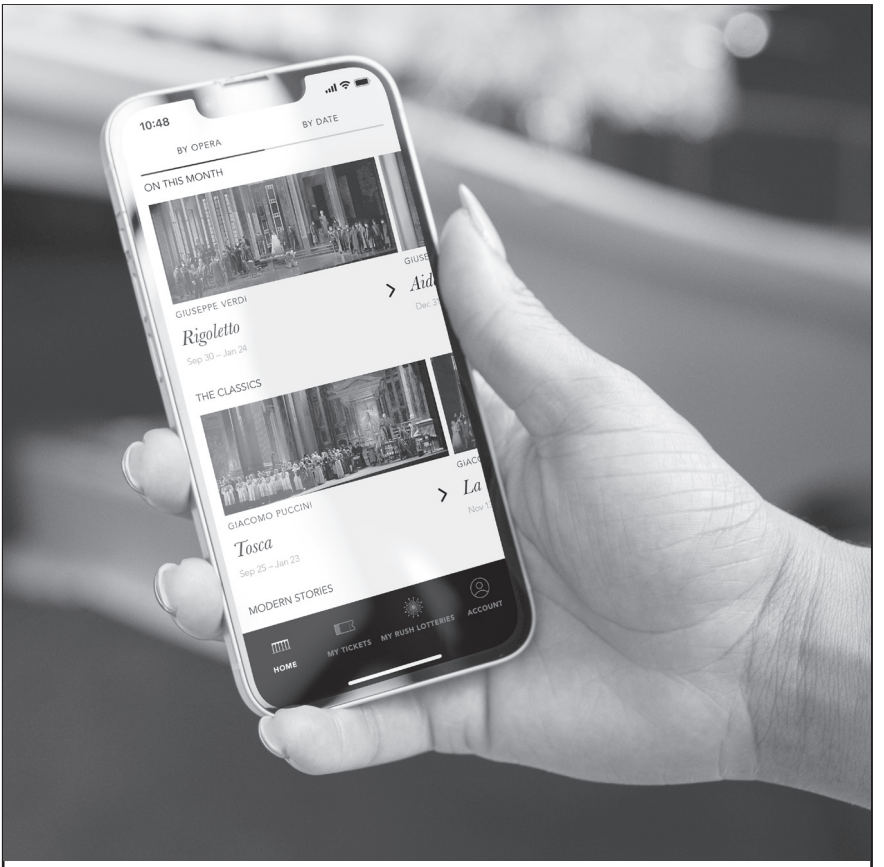
This week's operas mark the last performances by Elaine Douvas, principal oboe of the Met Orchestra since 1977. Ms. Douvas joined the Met when she was 25 years old, following four years as principal oboe of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under Robert Shaw, and she is proud to have been a part of the transformative years when the Met Orchestra became recognized as a world-class ensemble. She has served as oboe instructor at the Juilliard School since 1982 and is also chairman of the woodwind department. Among her career highlights are Leontyne Price's farewell performance of *Aida* for live television in 1985 and her 2004 performance of Strauss's Oboe Concerto with the Met Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. "I want to thank the Met audience for their love and support of classical music," says Douvas. "It has been my great pleasure to sound the tuning A and to play in this glorious hall for the past 47 years."

ANCIENT HISTORY

In adapting the classic Orpheus myth for the operatic stage, Gluck focused on only three solo characters, but he also created a large role for the chorus, who serve as both Orfeo's earthly companions and the denizens of the underworld. When conceiving his vibrant staging for the Met, director and choreographer Mark Morris envisioned the nearly 100-member chorus as witnesses from history. "They're involved personally in Orfeo's quest," he says. Fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi created unique costumes for the choristers, transforming each of them into a recognizable historic figure—from Josephine Baker to George Washington to Maria Callas. Even Gluck himself

PHOTO: KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

is represented. Standing on three balconies facing the audience, they serve as a mirror to Orfeo's story. "Surrounded both visually and musically by the chorus," Donald Palumbo, the Met's C. Graham Berwind, III Chorus Master, explains, "Orfeo's struggle becomes more clearly focused. And with the individual costumes, representing figures from all centuries and professions, the chorus illustrates the universality and timeless allure of the Orpheus myth." Rather than have this chorus of spirits interact physically with the principal characters, "a lot of the action of the chorus is done by dancers," Morris says. "I wanted it to be a little ambiguous, a little bit confusing who's doing what, so that the union of chorus and dancers feels inevitable and inseparable." In the end, the juxtaposition of evocative contemporary choreography and familiar faces from the past lends a timeless quality to Gluck's enduring tale of love and redemption.



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J. David Jackson

CONDUCTOR (PORT CHESTER, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Met and a concert with the Met Orchestra Chamber Ensemble at Carnegie Hall.

MET APPEARANCES A member of the Met's music staff since 2001, he has conducted *Porgy and Bess*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *The Queen of Spades*, and *Hansel and Gretel* (debut, 2008).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He has led *Euryanthe* at the Glyndebourne Festival, *War and Peace* at the Canadian Opera Company, Mark Adamo's *Little Women* in Bruges, *Faust* in Genoa, *Der Freischütz* in Bangkok, *Elektra* in Istanbul, *L'Italiana in Algeri* at Wolf Trap Opera, *Simon Boccanegra* and *La Fanciulla del West* at Kentucky Opera, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* at Central City Opera, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Opera Omaha, and *Boris Godunov*, *Khovanshchina*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and *Don Pasquale* in Brussels. His compositions include *Model Love*, for singers, chamber orchestra, and rock band; *Stones of Love*, for singers and chamber orchestra; *Magnificat*, for chorus; the song cycle *Water: The Bearer of Love*; and a violin fantasy, sonata for cello and piano, and violin concerto. His 2000 recording of Act II of Lewis Spratlan's *Life Is a Dream* earned the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

Ying Fang

SOPRANO (NINGBO, CHINA)

THIS SEASON Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Met, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* at the Paris Opera, Mozart's Requiem with Pygmalion, Mozart's Mass in C Minor with the Munich Philharmonic, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* and Poppea in *Agrippina* at Dutch National Opera, Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Noord Nederlands Orkest, Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra of St. Luke's, Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Santa Fe Opera.

MET APPEARANCES Since her 2013 debut as Madame Podtochina's Daughter in *The Nose*, she has sung nearly 100 performances of 13 roles, including Zerlina, Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, and Servilia in *La Clemenza di Tito*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Susanna at the Vienna State Opera, Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Paris Opera, and Dutch National Opera; Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in concert at the Verbier Festival; Morgana in *Alcina* at the Glyndebourne Festival; Ännchen in *Der Freischütz* at Dutch National Opera; and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.

Elena Villalón

SOPRANO (AUSTIN, TEXAS)

THIS SEASON Amore in *Orfeo ed Euridice* for her debut at the Met; Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Frasquita in *Carmen* in Frankfurt; Handel's *Messiah* and Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra; Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* at the Tyrolean Festival Erl; Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra; Sheila in the world premiere of Gregory Spears's *The Righteous* at the Santa Fe Opera; and Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She was a 2019 winner of the Met's Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition (formerly the National Council Auditions). As a member of the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt, she has sung Atalanta in *Serse* and Iole in *Hercules*. Additional performances include Tina in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* and Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Dallas Opera; Susanna at Austin Opera; Nannetta in *Falstaff* at the Santa Fe Opera; Susanna, Amy in the world premiere of Joel Thompson's *The Snowy Day*, Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, Inés in *La Favorite*, and La Mujer in the world premiere of Javier Martinez's *El Milagro de Recuerdo* at Houston Grand Opera; and the Queen of Sheba in *Solomon* with the English Concert.

Anthony Roth Costanzo

COUNTERTENOR (DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA)

THIS SEASON Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Met, Medoro in *Orlando* in Madrid, Francisco in Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* at the Paris Opera, Jonathan in the world premiere of Gregory Spears's *The Righteous* at the Santa Fe Opera, and recitals in London, Boston, and Washington, D.C.

MET APPEARANCES The title role of Philip Glass's *Akhnaten*, Unulfo in *Rodelinda* (debut, 2011), Ferdinand and Prospero in *The Enchanted Island*, and Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS This June, he becomes general director and president of Opera Philadelphia. He has headlined performances at the Glyndebourne Festival, English National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Canadian Opera Company, and Finnish National Opera, among others, and has appeared in world premieres by Jimmy López Bellido, Jake Heggie, Matthew Aucoin, Paola Prestini, Suzanne Farrin, Bernard Rands, Scott Wheeler, Mohammed Fairouz, Steve Mackey, and Nico Muhly. As a producer, he has created projects for Opera Philadelphia, the New York Philharmonic, BBC Proms, WQXR, and St. Ann's Warehouse, among others. He was a 2021 recipient of the Met's Beverly Sills Artist Award, established by Agnes Varis and Karl Leichtman.