

GIUSEPPE VERDI

REQUIEM

CONDUCTOR
James Levine

SOPRANO
Krassimira Stoyanova

MEZZO-SOPRANO
Ekaterina Semenchuk

TENOR
Aleksandrs Antonenko

BASS
Ferruccio Furlanetto

Metropolitan Opera
Orchestra and Chorus

CHORUS MASTER
Donald Palumbo

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR EMERITUS
James Levine

MUSIC DIRECTOR DESIGNATE
Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Friday November 24, 2017
8:00–9:25 PM

First time this season

The Verdi Requiem Concert Series was
made possible by a generous gift from
Chris and Bruce Crawford

The Metropolitan Opera Chorus costumes
were underwritten with a generous gift from
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The Metropolitan Opera

2017-18 SEASON

The 50th Metropolitan Opera performance of
GIUSEPPE VERDI'S

REQUIEM

Requiem and Kyrie (SOLO QUARTET, CHORUS)

Dies irae

Dies irae (CHORUS)

Tuba mirum (CHORUS)

Mors stupebit (BASS)

Liber scriptus (MEZZO-SOPRANO, CHORUS)

Quid sum miser (SOPRANO, MEZZO-SOPRANO, TENOR)

Rex tremendae (SOLO QUARTET, CHORUS)

Recordare (SOPRANO, MEZZO-SOPRANO)

Ingemisco (TENOR)

Confutatis (BASS, CHORUS)

Lacrimosa (SOLO QUARTET, CHORUS)

Offertorium (SOLO QUARTET)

Sanctus (DOUBLE CHORUS)

Agnus Dei (SOPRANO, MEZZO-SOPRANO, CHORUS)

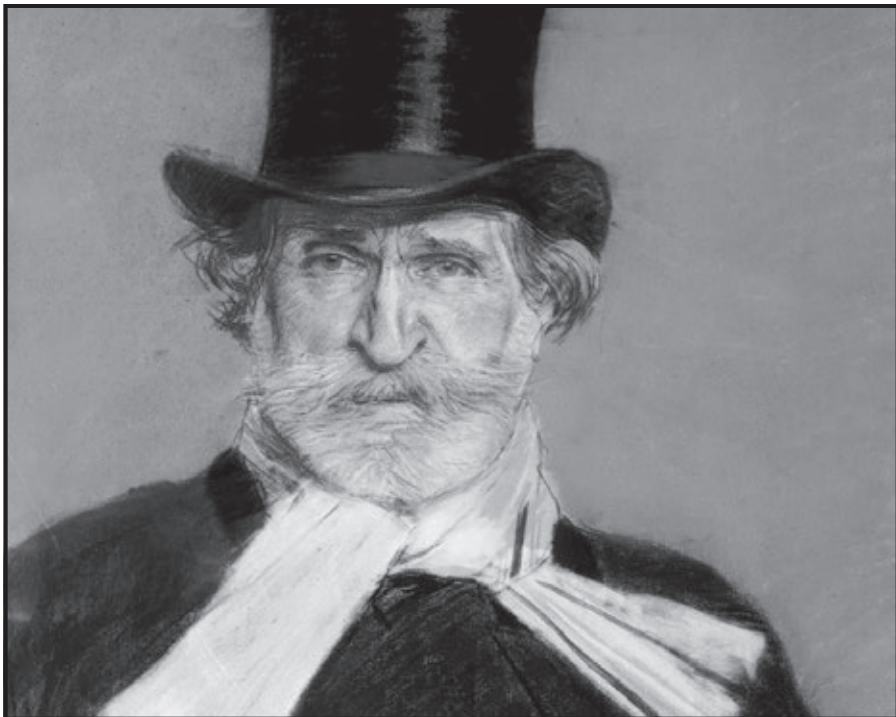
Lux aeterna (MEZZO-SOPRANO, TENOR, BASS)

Libera me (SOPRANO, CHORUS)

This performance
is being broadcast
live on Metropolitan
Opera Radio on
SiriusXM channel 75
and streamed at
metopera.org.

This evening's concert will be performed without intermission.

Friday, November 24, 2017, 8:00-9:25PM



A portrait of
Giuseppe Verdi by
Giovanni Boldini

Musical Preparation **J. David Jackson** and **Bryan Wagorn***
Stage Band Conductor **Gregory Buchalter**
Met Titles **Michael Panayos**
Lighting Design **Aaron Sporer**
Costumes for the female choristers designed by
Isaac Mizrahi
Chorus Costumes executed by **Metropolitan Opera
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Giuseppe Verdi

Requiem

Premiere: Church of San Marco, Milan, 1874

The *Messa da Requiem* (Italian for “Requiem Mass”) stands as a unique testimony to the artistic and human vision of Giuseppe Verdi, encapsulating all of his dramatic and psychological genius unfettered by the usual constraints of dramaturgy and theatrical practicalities. Never intended for liturgical use, the work is primarily a dramatization-in-concert of the issues at stake in that text: the battle of life against death as it is waged in the individual, the community, and the cosmos. After the death of Gioachino Rossini (1795–1868), Verdi agreed to contribute a section for a grand Requiem in honor of the late maestro, but this goal was never realized; however with the death of author Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873), a pivotal figure in Italy’s struggle for independence and unification, the *Risorgimento*, the composer decided to craft a complete Requiem of his own, dedicated to Manzoni. The work was born during a period of introspection among the Italian musical community and stands as a Requiem not only for an individual at the moment of death but also for the national ideals of the *Risorgimento*, and, by extension, for idealism itself. The universe and God—or at least humanity’s relationship with the divine—are also explicitly drawn into the paradigm. All of this drama, in the noblest sense of the word, is patent in the music, which ranks among the composer’s best.

The Creator

In a remarkable career spanning six decades in the theater, Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) composed nearly 30 operas, at least half of which are at the core of today’s repertory. In addition to his mastery of the genre, Verdi’s role in Italy’s cultural and political development has made him a national treasure in his native country.

The Text

Verdi’s Requiem is a setting of the text for the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead as it existed from the late Middle Ages to its revision in 1970. Much of the text shares elements with every Catholic Mass, but there are also additions specific to this Mass. The opening, also called “Requiem” after its first words—“Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine” (“Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord”)—only appeared in services for the dead. The final section of Verdi’s work, the “Libera me” (“Deliver me”), is not part of the service itself but a separate prayer recited over the casket after the Mass. Unlike other Catholic

liturgies, the Requiem includes a long section—from the “Dies irae” through the “Lacrimosa”—whose source is non-scriptural. Instead, the words come from a dramatic poem attributed to the Franciscan monk Thomas of Celano (ca. 1200–ca. 1265) that vividly evokes the terrors of Hell and fears of Judgment Day.

The Music

The score calls for a large chorus, full orchestra, and four soloists. The sensational effects found in Verdi’s operas are also in full force here—the thundering drama of the “Dies irae,” repeated at key moments throughout the piece, for example, appropriately captures the terror associated with contemplating the end of time. Orchestral commentary on the “action” recalls the sophisticated techniques found in the operas of this mature phase of Verdi’s career—from the loud rumble of the trombones at the end of the “Sanctus” to the pictorial use of the oboe, as the text refers to herding sheep, in the beautiful tenor solo “Ingemisco.” Having the chorus available throughout allows for it to participate in many different ways. They respond to the soloists in quiet moments, such as the wrenching “Lacrimosa,” as well as in the monumental “Libera me” finale. Verdi even gives two of the most unforgettable passages of the score entirely to the chorus: the “Dies irae” and the complex “Sanctus” fugue. But the four soloists bear the greatest share of communicating the ideas at stake in the monumental text. This is nowhere more apparent than in the final “Libera me.” The greatest emotional power here derives from the solo soprano part, which climaxes with a run up to a high C that seems to embody the sum total of human fear and aspiration.

Met History

The Requiem first appeared at the Met in 1901, with four performances in Verdi’s memory following the composer’s death that year. It returned throughout the next few seasons and sporadically after, for a total of nearly 50 performances, including some in tribute to other individuals—President John F. Kennedy in 1964, Met Assistant General Manager Francis Robinson in 1981, and Luciano Pavarotti in 2008. Four performances in the 1950s were given as an alternative to the then-customary Good Friday performances of Wagner’s *Parsifal*. Up until this season, Music Director Emeritus James Levine had conducted 13 performances of the piece, a record among a list of conductors that includes Arturo Toscanini, Walter Damrosch, Tullio Serafin, Bruno Walter, and Georg Solti. Among the many memorable soloists who have performed the work with the Met are sopranos Zinka Milanov, Leontyne Price, and Renée Fleming; mezzo-sopranos Rosalind Elias, Florence Quivar, and Olga Borodina; tenors Beniamino Gigli, Carlo Bergonzi, and Luciano Pavarotti; and basses Cesare Siepi, James Morris, and René Pape.



CHRIS LEE / MET OPERA

MASSENET

THAÏS

NOV 11 mat, 15, 18 eve, 22, 25 eve, 28 **DEC** 2 eve

Soprano Ailyn Pérez makes her role debut as the title courtesan of Massenet's meditation on love, passion, and redemption. Gerald Finley is Athanaël, the holy man entranced by Thaïs's charms, with French maestro Emmanuel Villaume on the podium for this sensual and spiritual score.

Tickets from \$25

metopera.org

Program Note

There is a unifying theme throughout Verdi's works: a profound and sympathetic understanding of individuals struggling within the larger, usually oppressive, society. The Requiem is perhaps the supreme example of this, extending those issues infinitely to explore the individual confronting the cosmos itself. A celebrated but often misunderstood masterpiece, the Requiem and the implications of its magnificent music can only be fully understood within the context of its creation.

The great composer Gioachino Rossini died in 1868. A mere four days after Rossini's death, Verdi wrote to his publisher, Ricordi, to propose a collaboration of living Italian composers, each of whom would contribute one section of a Requiem Mass in honor of the late maestro. The idea of a confraternity of creators from a common motherland acknowledging the death of an august father figure had clear resonance at a pivotal moment in Italian history. In the late 1860s, the Kingdom of Italy existed after decades of toil to unite fractious regions and regain control of those occupied by foreign powers, but its borders were still being fought over, and Rome had not yet been absorbed from the Papacy.

Thirteen composers contributed to this Requiem, including Verdi, who penned the final segment, the "Libera me". (None of the other 12 composers—rightly or wrongly—is remembered today.) Problems arose with conductors, committees, and competing interests, however, and the work was not performed. Verdi was left with an unfinished project and a mass of resentments.

Soon, though, he had the opportunity to reboot the Requiem on his own terms when author Alessandro Manzoni died in 1873 at the age of 88. Manzoni was revered as a figure of the Risorgimento, the Italian movement of dawning national consciousness in the early 19th century, in which the young Verdi had also been an important player. Manzoni's writings, especially his massive novel *I Promessi Sposi* (*The Betrothed*) presented a panorama of Italy and Italians, from the exalted to the common, both positive and negative. Furthermore, his prose was commanding enough to define the modern Italian language for a land long divided by mutually unintelligible dialects. Manzoni's funeral in Milan was a state occasion with tens of thousands of mourners, presaging Verdi's own funeral there 28 years later. Manzoni's death, even more than Rossini's, was a moment for national self-examination.

Much had changed in Italy in the five years between Rossini's and Manzoni's deaths. Rome was finally the national capital, and borders, recognizable today, were set. Yet there was still disappointment. Divisions remained, the economy continued to struggle, and the mass emigrations to the New World were beginning. If this Requiem were to be a Manzoni Requiem, then it would perform as a Requiem for the Risorgimento, a eulogy for a nation's aspirations sung in the harsh daylight of contemporary political reality.

Verdi had already been working on his 1868 "Libera me" when he told Ricordi that he planned to write a Requiem for Manzoni shortly after visiting the

author's grave. He began working on the remainder of the Requiem in earnest in June, finishing it the following April. Milan's Church of San Marco was chosen for the premiere, which Verdi conducted on the first anniversary of Manzoni's death, to great public acclaim. The work was repeated at La Scala three days later, with even louder demonstrations of rapture. Over the next few years, Verdi managed a sort of company that toured the Requiem throughout Europe.

But the reaction was not uniformly ecstatic. The pushback was not against the brilliant music ("which could only have been done by a genius," remarked Johannes Brahms after glancing at the score), but rather that it was insufficiently religious. Eduard Hanslick, Wagner's critical nemesis, said "When a female singer appeals to Jesus, she shouldn't sound as if she were pining for her lover." (Exegetes on the Bible's erotic *Song of Solomon* might disagree). "Opera in church dress," sniffed conductor Hans von Bülow in an extravagantly piqued denunciation. Such criticisms come close to providing insight but miss the point: Only when we consider this supposed "flaw" of the Requiem—its dramatic nature—can we understand its full greatness.

Listeners are rewarded for paying as much attention to the text of the Requiem as to that of the composer's greatest operas—more, even. Verdi did exactly that, and he assumed his audience had an intimate familiarity with these words, memorized and permeating the subconscious. The modern listener needs to work harder, as the words (and the Latin language itself) are not a part of our lives as they were to Italians of 150 years ago.

The traditional Requiem Mass is a service in the Roman Catholic Church, usually given at funerals. It differs from the standard Mass form in important ways, most importantly in that, while almost all the words of the typical Catholic Mass are taken from the Bible, the Requiem Mass has addenda—most notably the "Dies irae" ("Day of Wrath"), a vivid poem about Judgment Day attributed to the 13th-century Franciscan brother Thomas of Celano, and the "Libera me," another separate poem meant as a prayer after the funeral itself. The subject—that is, the person(s) speaking—changes throughout the Requiem. In the first movement, the subjects are mourners asking God for eternal rest for the deceased. In the long "Dies irae," the perspective shifts to the first-person, one considering one's own death. The "Sanctus" text captures Judgment Day from the angelic point of view, an experience quite different from that of us poor mortals. And in the final "Libera me," the perspective returns to the first-person, with a subject who is very, very terrified by death. It is not frivolous to insist on these words as role-playing in the drama of life against death. Even the hardly frivolous *Catholic Encyclopedia* of 1913 says that the changes in subject in the Requiem Mass should be understood as "dramatic substitutions." In other words, the Requiem Mass is dramatic, and a drama that is sung is an opera. Both opera and the Catholic Church are essentially Italian creations, and Verdi's

Requiem can be understood as an opera, set in a traditional Catholic matrix, about the death of the idea of Italy and all other human aspirations.

When one considers the text as dialogue, the full Verdian humanity of the music leaps out. Once one realizes that the “Sanctus” is sung from the point of view of angels and saints, already blessed, the section’s fugal symmetry, like a cathedral’s rose window, makes perfect sense. Compare that to the fugue in the “Libera me,” which is jagged, irregular, and written with as many accidentals as can be found in many a modern score—a fugue like the “Sanctus,” but distorted by the terror of someone whose eternal life still hangs in the balance. The “Sanctus” is what religion tells us we should feel in that moment; the “Libera me” is what Verdi tells us we would actually feel.

This arresting final section recalls Verdi’s writing in *Otello*, premiered 13 years after the Requiem. The first five minutes of Verdi’s final tragedy—the famous storm scene—presents people in a similar situation as those in the “Libera me.” They face both personal and universal annihilation, and they turn on their Creator with something that sounds like anger, demanding salvation. In that moment, Verdi uses a pattern of six repeated notes, double triplets, at the mention of God, as in the “Tuba mirum” of the Requiem. He uses the same figure in Act III of *Otello* for the Venetian emissary. It appears to stand for patriarchal authority—or, rather, to the human understanding of that authority, which is what interested the humanist Verdi more than the deity Itself. This preference explains the prominence of the soprano soloist throughout the “Libera me” and especially her final ascent to a high C that slices through the fortissimo chorus. Now think of the Triumphal Scene in *Aida*. Verdi does not take sides between the nations at war—he lets the soprano voice slice through that chorus to show us how the individual’s plight in this complex situation is more poignant to him than the war itself. In the Requiem, Verdi the humanist (if not agnostic or even outright atheist) does something analogous. He does not tell us what God will do when humans beg for salvation (unlike some other Requiems that include the “In Paradisum” prayer and other promises of ultimate consolation) or even if God exists. He tells us that the plight of the human who contemplates death is worthy of pathos and respect. *Aida*, *Otello*, and the Requiem all say the same thing: Nations may form and rage and dissolve, and higher powers may save us or will our destruction, but what we should concern ourselves with are human individuals and their plights.

—William Berger

William Berger, a Met staff writer, radio producer, and commentator, is the author of Verdi with a Vengeance and Wagner without Fear



KEN HOWARD/MET OPERA

MOZART

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

DEC 6, 9 eve, 12, 15, 19, 23 mat, 29 **JAN** 4, 10, 13 eve, 19

Two superb casts—including Ailyn Pérez, Nadine Sierra, Isabel Leonard (pictured), Luca Pisaroni, Mariusz Kwiecien, and Ildar Abdrazakov (pictured)—star in Mozart's comic yet profound masterpiece of love and forgiveness. Acclaimed maestro Harry Bicket conducts.

Tickets from \$25

metopera.org

The Cast



James Levine

MUSIC DIRECTOR EMERITUS (CINCINNATI, OHIO)

THIS SEASON In his 47th season at the Met, his second as Music Director Emeritus, he conducts *Die Zauberflöte*, *Tosca*, *Luisa Miller*, and *Il Trovatore*—the former three also being transmitted live in HD—as well as a special concert series of Verdi's Requiem.

MET HISTORY Since his 1971 debut leading *Tosca*, he has conducted more than 2,500 performances at the Met—more than any other conductor in the company's history. He became the Met's Music Director in 1976, a position he held for four decades, and was the company's Artistic Director from 1986 until 2004. Of the nearly 90 operas he has conducted at the Met, 13 were company premieres, including *Stiffelio*, *La Cenerentola*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Erwartung*, and *Idomeneo*. He also led the world premieres of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*. He founded the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program in 1980 and returned Wagner's complete *Ring* to the repertoire in 1989. He and the Met Orchestra began touring in concert in 1991, and he has led the ensemble in performances around the world, including in Japan, the U.S., and throughout Europe.



Krassimira Stoyanova

SOPRANO (VELIKO TARNOVO, BULGARIA)

THIS SEASON Verdi's Requiem at the Met, the title role of *Rusalka* and the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Vienna State Opera, Amelia Grimaldi in *Simon Boccanegra* and the title role of *Aida* at La Scala, and the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Bavarian State Opera.

MET APPEARANCES *Aida*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Violetta in *La Traviata* (debut, 2001), Nedda in *Pagliacci*, and Liù in *Turandot*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include the title role of *Lucrezia Borgia* and Danae in Richard Strauss's *Die Liebe der Danae* at the Salzburg Festival; Elizabeth in *Don Carlo* at La Scala, Covent Garden, and the Vienna State Opera; Verdi's Requiem at La Scala and in Vienna, Zurich, and Orange; Amelia Grimaldi at Staatsoper Berlin; and Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the Vienna State Opera. She has also sung Marguerite in *Faust* at Staatsoper Berlin, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and the Paris Opera; Verdi's Requiem in Rome; *Aida*, Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*, and Leonora in *Il Trovatore* at the Bavarian State Opera; and the Marschallin at the Salzburg Festival.



MARTY SOHL/MET OPERA

LEHÁR

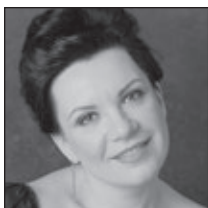
THE MERRY WIDOW

DEC 14, 16 eve, 20, 23 eve, 27, 30 mat **JAN** 2, 5, 11

Audience favorite Susan Graham stars as Hanna Glawari, the title character of Lehár's effervescent operetta. Ward Stare makes his Met debut conducting Susan Stroman's high-spirited production.

Tickets from \$25

metopera.org



Ekaterina Semenchuk

MEZZO-SOPRANO (MINSK, BELARUS)

THIS SEASON Verdi's Requiem and Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Met, Amneris in *Aida* at Washington National Opera and in Madrid and Tokyo, Azucena in *Il Trovatore* at the Paris Opera, and the Princess de Bouillon in *Adriana Lecouvreur* in Baden-Baden.

MET APPEARANCES Marina in *Boris Godunov*, Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, Pauline in *The Queen of Spades*, and Sonya in *War and Peace* (debut, 2002).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS She appears regularly at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, where her roles have included Amneris, the Princess de Bouillon, Charlotte in *Werther*, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila*, Fricka in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino*, Azucena, and Didon in *Les Troyens*, among others. Recent performances include Amneris at the Salzburg Festival and San Francisco Opera, Princess Eboli in *Don Carlo* at Covent Garden and La Scala, Spring Beauty in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* at the Paris Opera, Azucena in Rome and at Covent Garden and the Paris Opera, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* at LA Opera and in Valencia, Fricka in *Das Rheingold* in concert at the Edinburgh International Festival, Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* in concert at the Verbier Festival, and Preziosilla in Salerno.



Aleksandrs Antonenko

TENOR (RIGA, LATVIA)

THIS SEASON Verdi's Requiem and Calaf in *Turandot* at the Met; Cavaradossi in *Tosca* in Stockholm, Dresden, and at the Salzburg Festival and Vienna State Opera; the title role of *Otello* in concert in Budapest; and Calaf in Zurich.

MET APPEARANCES Otello, Don José in *Carmen*, Pollione in *Norma*, Grigory in *Boris Godunov*, Luigi in *Il Tabarro*, and the Prince in *Rusalka* (debut, 2009).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Cavaradossi in Verona and at Deutsche Oper Berlin; Calaf, des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut*, Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Canio in *Pagliacci* at Covent Garden; Pollione in Riga and at the Bavarian State Opera; Otello in Zurich; Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West* at the Vienna State Opera; Samson in *Samson et Dalila* at the Paris Opera; and Radamès in *Aida* at the Paris Opera and in Riga. He has also sung Calaf at La Scala and in concert in Riga, Radamès in Zurich, Dick Johnson and Samson at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Hermann in *The Queen of Spades* at the Vienna State Opera and in Zurich, and Otello at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, the Paris Opera, Vienna State Opera, Salzburg Festival, and in Rome and Chicago.



CORY WEAVER/MET OPERA

HUMPERDINCK

HANSEL AND GRETEL

DEC 18, 22, 26, 28mat, 30eve **JAN** 1, 6mat

Just in time for the holidays, Richard Jones's delightfully twisted take on the classic fairy tale returns to the Met, with Tara Erraught and Lisette Oropesa as the rambunctious title siblings. Maestro Donald Runnicles conducts this English-language production.

Tickets from \$25

metopera.org



Ferruccio Furlanetto

BASS (SACILE, ITALY)

THIS SEASON Verdi's *Requiem* at the Met, Prince Ivan Khovansky in Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* at the Vienna State Opera, and the title role of Massenet's *Don Quichotte* with Opera Australia.

MET APPEARANCES More than 200 performances of 16 roles, including Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra*, King Philip II and the Grand Inquisitor (debut, 1980) in *Don Carlo*, de Silva in *Ernani*, Don Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Méphistophélès in *Faust*, Cardinal Brogni in Halévy's *La Juive*, and the title role and Leporello in *Don Giovanni*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He is a Kammersänger and honorary member of the Vienna State Opera, where his most recent roles include Philip II, Fiesco, Banquo in *Macbeth*, and the title role of *Boris Godunov*. Recent performances include Zaccaria in *Nabucco* in concert at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre; Philip II at La Scala, San Francisco Opera, Opera Australia, and the Mariinsky Theatre; *Don Quichotte* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Canadian Opera Company, and San Diego Opera; Fiesco at the Mariinsky Theatre, Staatsoper Berlin, and in Barcelona; Don Basilio and Prince Gremin at Covent Garden; and Procida in *I Vespri Siciliani* in concert in Madrid.

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www.metopera.org



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