

Culture
calls

2011

TALLINN

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Postimees

TALLINK

OFFICIAL CARRIER < ESTONIAN AIR



ESTONIAN
NATIONAL OPERA

PARSIFAL

August 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2011 in Noblessner Foundry

within the frameworks of "European Capital of Culture Tallinn 2011" and Nargenfestival

Music Director and Conductor: **Arvo Volmer**. Conductor: **Risto Joost**

Stage Director: **Nicola Raab** (Germany). Associate Director and Fight Choreographer: **Ran Arthur Braun** (Israel)

Designer: **Robert Innes Hopkins** (UK). Lighting Designer: **David Cunningham** (Scotland)

CAST: Parsifal – **Richard Decker** (U.S.A)/**Roman Sadnik** (Austria)

Gurnemanz – **Manfred Hemm** (Germany)/**Richard Wiegold** (UK)

Kundry – **Irmgard Vilsmaier** (Germany)/**Magdalena Anna Hofmann** (Austria)

Amfortas – **Eike Wilm Schulte** (Germany)/**Rauno Elp**

Klingsor – **Martin Winkler** (Austria)

Titurel – **Koit Soasepp** (Finnish National Opera)/**Priit Volmer**, etc.

 Nord Stream
The new gas supply route for Europe

SOKOS HOTEL
VIRU



www.opera.ee

Season's Choice

From stellar casts to the most exciting new productions and the hottest young talent, take your seats for the forthcoming 2011/12 Opera Season

The ball marking the opening of a new season at the Vienna State Opera. Lessing Archive

AROUND EUROPE

Opera Now's pick of the top 10 new productions to see in Europe this season.

Jonas Kaufmann as Énée in *Les Troyens*. Photo by Matthias Bothor/DG



01 **LES TROYENS** Berlioz

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London
June/July 2012

This two-part epic opera by Hector Berlioz is so rarely staged that the last Covent Garden production was in 1957. Virgil's 12-part poem *The Aeneid* is transformed into monumental Romantic French opera with a richly coloured musical score.

What to expect at Covent Garden

Cast: Jonas Kaufmann (in the role of Aeneas) and Eva-Maria Westbroek (Didon) are two of the most compelling actor-singers on the operatic stage today. You will be pushed to find a finer cast than this. **Director:** David McVicar once the enfant terrible of British opera, has grown up. His productions at Covent Garden (*Rigoletto*,

Magic Flute, *Aida*) have tended to be darkly atmospheric. His work Glyndebourne has seen him strike a lighter note with productions that are beautiful, coherent and thought-provoking.

Conductor: Tony Pappano, music director at the Royal Opera House, excels in lush, high-Romantic works such as this.

Go prepared

Short of reading the whole of Virgil's 12-part epic in Latin, try the recording made live at the Met, New York in 1974, with Jon Vickers, Christa Ludwig and Shirley Verrett, and conducted by Rafael Kubelik. Available on the Lyrica Records label.

02 ARABELLA Strauss

Paris Opera, Bastille
June/July 2012

In this 'lyric comedy' of manners, Richard Strauss and his librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal collaborated for the last time to produce a brittle, brilliant snapshot of Viennese society, bound by class and convention. Love and sex are bought and sold as family fortunes hang on suitable marriages being forged. The plot is full of Mozart-like misunderstandings and muddles, but a handsome stranger from a far off land saves the day...

What to expect at the Paris Opera

Cast: Nobody can sing Strauss like Renée Fleming who takes the title role in Paris. She swoops and soars idiomatically, as if this music was written for her voice. She is paired in this production with Michael Volle (Mandryka) one of the most sought after baritones around, whose voice combines subtlety and power. The young German soprano Julia Kleiter, who plays Arabella's sister Zdenka, is a lovely singer destined for a big career.

Director: From Switzerland, Marco Arturo Marelli is becoming a Strauss director of choice in international opera houses. His productions are stylish and have just the right combination of warm sentimentality and arch, ironic wit.

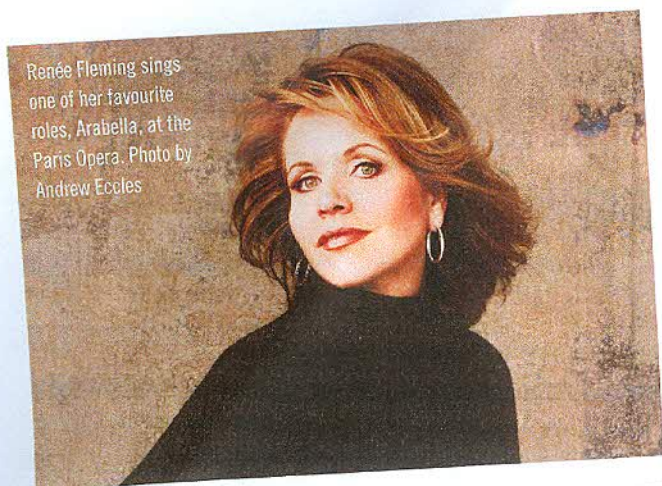
Conductor: The young, Swiss-born Philippe Jordan has been a hugely positive influence on the Paris Opera orchestra since he took over as music director in 2009. His Strauss conducting is warm but shows an emotional restraint that stops the music from becoming cloying.

Go prepared

You can experience Renée Fleming as Arabella on DVD, in a sleekly modern production by Goetz Friedrich from Zurich Opera. Released by Decca

Feeling adventurous?

In recent years, Paris Opera has championed the works of contemporary French composer Philippe Fénelon (born 1952). This season it's the turn of his 2010 opera, *La Cerisaie*, based on Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.



Renée Fleming sings one of her favourite roles, Arabella, at the Paris Opera. Photo by Andrew Eccles

03 THE TALES OF HOFFMANN Offenbach

Bavarian State Opera, National Theatre, Munich
October/November 2011 (Also at the Munich Opera Festival in July 2012)

Charming French music that has its roots in operetta but aspires to grand opera. Based on a series of short stories by the 18th-century German author, musician and critic E T A Hoffmann in which the writer/protagonist goes in search of love on three occasions, each ending in disaster. Fed up with failure, he renounces love in order to pursue his literary muse. This peculiar piece of romantic whimsy is underpinned by a gorgeous, lyrical score that includes the famous *Venetian Barcarolle*. The production (with a different cast) goes to English National Opera in February/March 2012.



Diana Damrau scores twice in our top ten, in Munich and Barcelona

What to expect at the Bavarian State Opera

Cast: The extraordinary Diana Damrau is one of the few sopranos around who can sing all three of the taxing lead female roles in this opera with total confidence. Appearing as Hoffmann, tenor Rolando Villazón's voice is in pretty decent shape again after surgery, and he'll make for a intensely romantic operatic hero.

Director: Richard Jones has become something of a legend in the British opera world, consistently proving to be one of the most intelligent and imaginative opera directors around. His productions that have real visual flare, quirkiness and wit – perfect for the eccentricities of *Hoffmann*.

Conductor: Aged 37, Greek conductor Constantinos Carydis is a rising talent on the European opera circuit. This *Hoffmann* marks a major career step for him.

Go prepared

The iconic British film directing duo of Powell and Pressburger turned their genius to *Hoffmann* with a beguiling cinematic adaptation of the work, released in 1951, with the score conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. It doesn't resemble anything you'll see in an opera house, but it certainly evokes the fantasy world that Offenbach captures in his music. A DVD has just been released (see Richard Fawkes's review in this issue).

Feeling adventurous?

Munich's season includes a new production of Puccini's *Turandot*. Nothing outlandish in that, perhaps, except it will be staged by the Catalan theatre group La Fura dels Baus, who generally have a radical approach to putting opera on stage. Be prepared for some powerful visual imagery.

Anna Netrebko is the star attraction in La Scala's new *Don Giovanni*. Photo by Dario Acosta



04 DON GIOVANNI *Mozart*

Teatro alla Scala, Milan
December 2011/January 2012

Mozart's compelling masterpiece explores the depths to which a human soul can sink, beyond redemption. It treads a fine line between comedy, tragedy and horror. *Don Giovanni* remains one of the most popular operas in the repertoire. In the 2011/12 season alone, there will be 28 different productions in 27 cities around the world, including new productions stagings at the Met, Welsh National Opera and the Fenice in Venice. La Scala's new production opens the opera season in Milan.

What to expect at La Scala

Cast: Swedish baritone Peter Mattei is a fantastic performer, poised, polished and with genuine sex-appeal as the Don, a role that he sings the world over. But all eyes in Milan will be on Anna Netrebko's Donna Anna. Bryn Terfel also sprinkles stardust as Giovanni's sidekick Leporello. The superb Latvian mezzo Elina Garanca has had to cancel due to pregnancy, so Barbara Frittoli will step into the role of Donna Elvira (which she also sings at the Met this season).

Director: Canadian Robert Carsen stages operas with cool, thoughtful clarity. He has a feeling for changes of gear from comic to tragic – so vital in this opera with its quixotic mood shifts.

Conductor: Daniel Barenboim has become something of an honorary director of music at La Scala. The orchestra responds to his maestro's touch with electrifying playing.

Go prepared

American film director Joseph Losey's magnificent and atmospheric cinema adaptation of *Don Giovanni* remains a classic of its kind, with a towering central performance from Ruggero Raimondi as the Don. Kiri Te Kanawa is a classy Donna Elvira. Available on DVD.

05 PARSIFAL *Wagner*

Estonian National Opera, Tallinn
August 2011

A new production of *Parsifal* is something of a landmark for any opera house. Estonian National Opera celebrates its year as European Capital of Culture with this behemoth of a work – the company has even shot a commercial to promote the opera. Ritual mixes with drama that is rich in symbolism and imagery. Wagner's profound, monumental score has been the subject of much analysis, the embodiment of opera as a vehicle for myth, as we hear the story of Knight Parsifal as he goes in search of the Holy Grail.



Risto Joost conducts *Parsifal* in Tallinn. Photo by K Kikkas

What to expect at Estonian National Opera

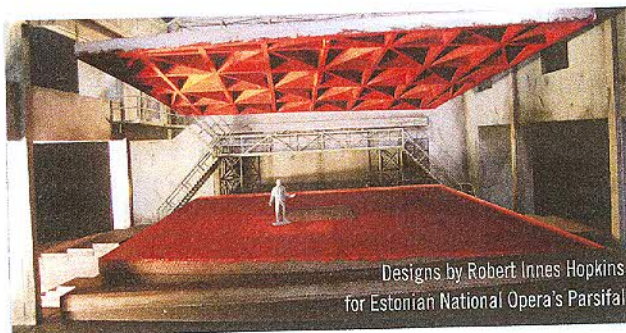
Cast: No starry names here, but there is plenty of solid and interesting casting that features a mix of highly-regarded German Wagnerians and rising talent from Estonia.

Director: German director Nicola Raab brings intellectual rigour to her productions, vital if the potent symbolism of *Parsifal* is to make sense. She works in Tallinn in collaboration with associate director Ran Arthur Braun, another young talent who is coming to the attention of opera managements around the world.

Conductor: One of the best reasons to hear this *Parsifal* is the presence in the pit of the fresh-faced 31 year old Risto Joost. He is tipped to be hot property across Europe based on his performances at the opera in Tallinn. He's already something of a rising star in the Baltics and Sweden and he combines his conducting with a career as a countertenor and choral music specialist.

Go prepared

A great starting point to get to know the piece is the DVD from the 2004 production at the Baden Baden Festival in Germany. Christopher Ventris is a superb Parsifal, and the DVD set (on the Opus Arte label) includes a 60-minute documentary with enlightening interviews with the cast and creative team.



Designs by Robert Innes Hopkins for Estonian National Opera's *Parsifal*