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# STAGEBILL

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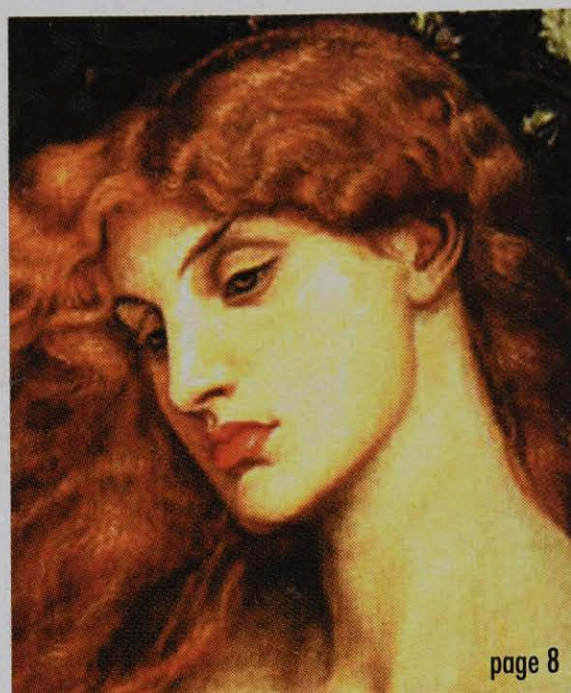
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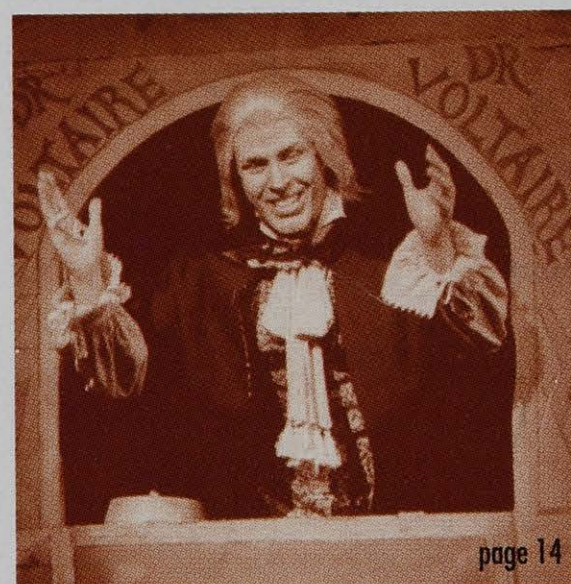
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PHOTO BY GEORGE MOTT

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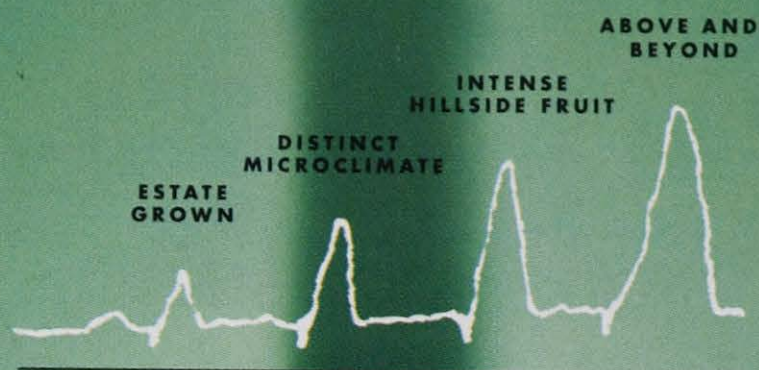
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WORLD STAGE PREMIERE

# after eden


As NYCO prepares for the world stage premiere of *Lilith* on November 11, composer Deborah Drattell and director Anne Bogart share their views of the ancient story with **REBECCA PALLER**.  
(*Story begins on page 10*)

*Trophy wife: Lady Lilith  
by Dante Gabriel Rosetti*



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**STAGEBILL:** *Who, exactly, is Lilith?*

**DEBORAH DRATTELL:** The story of Lilith comes from Jewish mysticism, although there's very little written about her in the Kabbalah. Lilith was the first wife of Adam. Unlike Eve, she did not come from Adam's rib but was created from the same matter as Adam—the dust and the earth. Lilith really is another part of who we nowadays think of as the ideal woman, but she was repressed. She refused to submit to Adam's will and was banished—and then went to the other extreme and produced thousands of offspring by seducing men in their sleep and taking their seed. The offspring were half-bodied creatures. When their fathers died they would appear at the graves and try to gain their birthright on the Twilight of the Sabbath. The opera takes place after the death of Adam, at his grave. The entire first act is Eve's lament. Eve is searching inside herself, and when Lilith appears at the end of the first act, the two women are forced to confront each other.

**ANNE BOGART:** Perhaps Lilith is a figment of Eve's imagination, and it's really about the Lilith that lives inside of Eve.

**DRATTELL:** Absolutely! What I love about the opera is that everyone expects Lauren Flanigan to be playing Lilith—but Lilith is played by the mezzo Beth Clayton. I wrote the role of Eve specifically for Lauren. I always envisioned her as Eve—the Mother, the Earth, the Nurturer.

**BOGART:** I think *Lilith* is a great title. Just think of what the word conjures in your mind.

**DRATTELL:** The associations that people have—Lilith Fair, *Lilith* magazine, the character of Lilith on *Cheers* and *Frasier*—are appropriate for the piece. But if I had called it *Eve*, the first thing everyone would have thought of is *All About Eve*! When you say *Lilith*, it immediately means something to a lot of people, something within the realm of what the opera is about.

**STAGEBILL:** *Deborah, tell us about the opera's music and your sources of inspiration.*

**DRATTELL:** In the late 1980s I wrote an orchestral version of *Lilith* [which was performed by the New York Philharmonic and recorded by Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony on the Delos label]. Next came a chamber-opera version that was scheduled for performance at the 92nd

Street Y but was cancelled due to union problems. Three years ago, *Lilith* was performed in a concert version at the Glimmerglass Opera. And now it's a full-fledged, three-act opera.

I used quite a bit of modality to create a Middle Eastern sound, but there are also some dissonant sections. The rituals of Judaism were a great source of inspiration for me. What is always in my mind is the thrilling tenor voice of the cantor I heard while I was growing up, at Manhattan Beach Jewish Center in Brooklyn. I wrote *Lilith* for a very large orchestra and extra percussion—there are parts that are very explosive, emotive. I wanted the tessitura of the soprano and mezzo-soprano to really stand out, and the male chorus is predominant as well. David Steven Cohen has



**Lilith composer Deborah Drattell**

*continued on page 42*



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BEHIND THE SCENES

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Skilled *comprimarios* like John Lankston, William Ledbetter, and Don Yule are the lifeblood of a busy repertory company like New York City Opera.

BY NEIL EDDINGER

*Garret antics: Don Yule, center, as Benoit in NYCO's La bohème*



Director David Ritch, usually the image of English affability, is in a state of modified consternation. He has just been informed that the bass who sings the title role in New York City Opera's new production of *The Mikado* is not available for the final run-through before rehearsals move to the main stage. He allows, with a great sigh, that the Mikado's cover will have to do for the day's rehearsal. Luckily, the substitute Mikado is Don Yule, a veteran bass in his 42nd year with the New York City Opera. A commanding six foot three, he proceeds to give a word-and-note-perfect, wickedly funny rendition of this "larger than opera" character who dominates the second act of Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta.

At the end of the rehearsal, Yule receives enthusiastic applause from the assembled company. Those who have seen him perform this role are not surprised, but Ritch is obviously impressed and relieved.

"Well, Don," he says. "I had no idea."

"Neither did I," Yule politely replies, with a typically modest smile.

Sitting nearby and joining in the applause is Yule's longtime colleague, tenor John Lankston. He covers the part of Ko-Ko and has performed the role in previous productions in his 35-year tenure with the company. He is no less prepared than Yule to step in at a moment's notice and deliver a stylish and irresistible characterization.

Meanwhile, in another part of the New York State Theater, baritone William Ledbetter rehearses the role of the Second Priest in *The Magic Flute*. "Beware the web of woman's weaving," he cautions Papageno in a fine baritone that has only mellowed during his 38 years with the company. His comic scenes as the spiritual tutor of Mozart's feath-

ered child of nature are seasoned by his own appearances as Papageno in past productions.

While Ledbetter, Lankston, and Yule have appeared with NYCO in every sort of part from lead to walk-on, the foundation of each one's repertory has been the *comprimario* roles. The term *comprimario* (Italian for "with the principal"), dating back to the strictly codified world of 19th-century opera, has come to denote any non-principal part from a short solo to a crucial supporting role.

Every experienced conductor, director, and performer has learned how critical these

supporting roles can be and how carefully they must be cast. Tito Gobbi, the great Italian dramatic baritone, wrote admiringly of "the *Comprimarios* with a capital C, the king-sized ones who can split a demi-semi-quaver in two, true masters of rhythm and diction. They are precise in stage action, always well-dressed and faultlessly made up. They are the ones on whom you lean in moments of uncertainty."

*La traviata* is an opera in which all three men have appeared in supporting roles: Lankston as Gaston, Yule as Dr. Grenville, and Ledbetter sometimes as Baron Douphol, other times as Marquis D'Obigny. Each of

these characters has only a few lines of recitative and otherwise sings with the chorus in the ensembles, yet each of these artists creates a fully realized human being on whom any debuting Violetta, Alfredo, or Germont could "lean in moments of uncertainty."

Their characterizations may change drastically with each new production of a standard work. In Frank Corsaro's staging of *Traviata*, Lankston played Gaston as a blasé fop, more preoccupied with his kitty cat than the courtesans of the demi-monde. In Nicholas Muni's version, updated to the 1980s, he played a hedonistic Gaston in

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**Dash: John Lankston in one of Dr. Pangloss' many guises in *Candide***

CAROL ROSEGG



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*\* Debut with New York City Opera*

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\* Debut with New York City Opera

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*Sunday Afternoon, November 11, 2001, 1:30–3:50*

# Lilith

*Music by Deborah Drattell*  
*Libretto by David Steven Cohen*

<i>Conductor</i>	George Manahan
<i>Director</i>	Anne Bogart
<i>Set Designer</i>	John Conklin
<i>Costume Designer</i>	James Schuette
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Christopher Akerlind (debut)
<i>Supertitles</i>	Celeste Montemarano
<i>Assistant Costume Designer</i>	Kate Carroll

*Cast*  
*(in order of vocal appearance)*

<i>Son/Serpent</i>	Marcus DeLoach
<i>Eve</i>	Lauren Flanigan
<i>Daughter/Wind</i>	Dana Beth Miller (debut)
<i>Lilith</i>	Beth Clayton (debut)
<i>Seer/Guardian</i>	Tom Nelis (debut)

The SITI Company: Bondo, Danyon Davis, Lizzy Cooper Davis,  
Christopher Healey, Donnie Mather,  
Lisa Mercer, Tom Nelis, Barney O'Hanlon  
Amy Lynn Sevic, Magin Schantz,  
Robert Wells Youngs

<i>Chorus Master</i>	Gary Thor Wedow
<i>Associate Conductor</i>	Brent McMunn
<i>Musical Preparation</i>	Marijo Newman, Susan Caldwell Nelson, Brent McMunn
<i>Assistant Directors</i>	Sam Helfrich, Andrew Chown
<i>Stage Managers</i>	Cindy Knight, Rachel Stern, Susan Whelan
<i>Assistant to the Director</i>	Barney O'Hanlon

The opera will be performed with one intermission.

*Lilith* was commissioned by Meet The Composer.

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A Chair for Conductors has been established by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.



## Synopsis

**Act I:** As a funeral passes through the gray mist of morning, men stand at the grave of Adam with Adam's son, who recites a prayer. He describes a righteous and fair God—one of faith without inequity. A woman—their mother—steps from the shadows to mourn the loss of her husband. This is Eve at the grave of Adam. As the mourners gather around the grave to pray to cleanse Adam of mortal sin and to banish unclean spirits, strange, misshapen figures appear, driven into a frenzy of tortured movement and shattered cries. Eve's Son and Daughter ask their mother who these apparitions are. Eve, haunted by some horror, does not answer, fearful even to look at them. Finally, she explains that these beasts are Adam's children, born of Adam's first mate. This woman was banished to a netherworld of shadows and unseemly passions—an eternity of dark hunger through which she now travels in the night, seducing men as they sleep and begetting demonic offspring. The children ask Eve the name of this beast, and when Eve reluctantly offers it—Lilith—a dreadful apparition—Lilith herself—appears. Lilith declares that the blackness in the souls of men shall belong forever to her; Eve falls, crying, into the night.

**Act II:** Having finished her ritual of mourning, Lilith embarks on the seduction of sleeping men, then spins off into the night to give birth to their unholy children. Eve awakens from a dream in which she has seen the horrors of Lilith's seduction. When Eve prays for help, a Seer appears who instructs her to look deep into shadow for her faith. She must find a dark twin—Lilith—and their souls must be joined. Only then will Lilith find mortality and Eve, faith. The Seer vanishes. Eve, haunted by his words, continues her search for Lilith and arrives at the entrance to Eden where the Garden is now withered and gray. The Serpent, in the voice of Eve's son, instructs her to once again eat of an apple from the tree. Eve summons the Wind, which answers in the voice of her daughter, to bring the fruit down to her. Not sure of what it will bring, Eve bites into the apple.

**Act III:** In Lilith's domain we see her and hear her shrieks of pain in her labor. Eve, entranced by Lilith's pain and her prayer, is drawn from the shadows. Eve's questions and doubts are answered by Lilith's seductive beckoning to "fall a silent fall" into her tormented soul. Together they fall into the darkness of seduction. But the moment of peace is broken by a shriek. The two women are thrown apart as Lilith accuses Eve of trickery. Eve counters that her own pain will end in death while Lilith's will burn forever. Eve is unable to complete the Seer's task; Lilith can never trust enough to allow Eve to lead her to mortality and redemption. There will be no light for Lilith, and Eve will remain half a soul. Eve is swept back to Adam's grave, and, as the men repeat the prayer for the cleansing of the mortal soul, she disappears into the night.

## Historical Note

Hebraic religious traditions have inspired Deborah Drattell a good deal in her relatively young composing career. New York City Opera audiences have already sampled such inspiration in the form of her one-act contribution, "The Festival of Regrets," to the company's three-composer evening *Central Park*, co-produced with Glimmerglass Opera and heard at the New York State Theater in 1999.

"Festival" was actually her second opera. The three-act *Lilith* began life earlier. Ms. Drattell first "met" the woman or creature called Lilith in a book, *Tradition and New Creation*, by Gershom Scholem, the noted scholar of the Kabbalah, that complex system of interpreting both the Old Testament and apocryphal events outside the official Scriptures. Kabbalistic sources describe Lilith as Adam's first wife, whom he abandoned when her passions became too much for him. She then became an underworld predator who slept around in what Carlisle Floyd's Little Bat in *Susannah* would surely have called "the worst sort of way," draining off from sleeping men the means to beget demons. Ms. Drattell's reading about Lilith resulted, first, in an 11-minute symphonic poem first performed in 1988. Then all of its music was absorbed into the three-act opera, portions of which were given in a concert performed at Glimmerglass two years ago.



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## ABOUT NEW YORK CITY OPERA

The 2001–2002 season builds on the daring spirit that has been the driving force behind New York City Opera since its founding in 1943. This year we will present *eight* new productions, continuing to infuse our repertory with an unprecedented degree of new work. By the end of the season, we will have presented 39 new productions in just six years, challenging and exhilarating our audience with unusual works and fresh approaches to the classics.

As we present bold re-conceptions of repertory favorites to expose their timeless power, we expand the standard operatic repertoire to encompass four centuries of opera—from unjustly neglected 17th-century masterpieces to challenging, exciting new works by 20th-century composers. We are especially committed to giving American works the prominence they deserve. In all productions, our goal is to create opera that is compelling theater—opera that engages both mind and spirit.

New funding initiatives have helped us achieve new heights of *artistic excellence* through lengthened rehearsal time, increased artists' fees, and more hours of coaching for young singers. We are continuing to invest heavily in our singers to ensure productions of the highest artistic quality. Our artists are our most valuable resource and they continue to reward us with unforgettable performances.

City Opera is the place to see the *stars of tomorrow* with nearly 40 young singers making their crucial New York debuts each year. Our distinguished alumni include Betty Allen, June Anderson, Renée Fleming, Jerry Hadley, Sherrill Milnes, Samuel Ramey, Beverly Sills, Norman Treigle, and Frederica von Stade. Major international artists, including Plácido Domingo and José Carreras, also received valuable opportunities at City Opera early in their careers.

City Opera's *Education and Community Service* activities include education programs in inner-city schools, informative lectures for the public, and a variety of educational materials in print and on the Internet, including a user-friendly guide to each season's programming. City Opera's nationally recognized schools programs—*Opera Is Elementary*, *Middle School Opera and Literacy Project*, and *New York City Opera High School Partnerships*—reach nearly 12,000 students of all grades in all five boroughs.

*This is an exciting time for City Opera.* Artistic exuberance fueled by improved financial stability is creating a rebirth for our company. Our outstanding team of singers, conductors, directors, and designers promises to sustain this thrilling energy. To support them, City Opera has committed to increasing the budget to \$35 million for the 2002 fiscal year. Our historic commitment to low ticket prices, however, will not change—meaning that even sold-out houses cover less than half the costs. City Opera must raise more than \$17 million this year to provide our artists the resources they need.

*Contributions from the many friends of New York City Opera are absolutely vital to the company's work, and we are sincerely grateful for each of the gifts acknowledged on these pages. We ask all of you who care about City Opera to join our dedicated family of supporters and invest in the future of this great institution.* For more information about City Opera, or if you would like to make a gift, call us at (212) 870-4210, or visit our website at <http://www.nycopera.com>.



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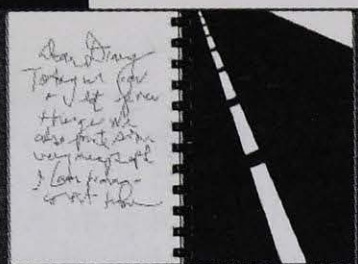
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# ROAD DIARIES

Two musical actors ponder the joys of performing in a hit show across America.

# Q & A



**Louise Pitre**

Donna Sheridan in *Mamma Mia!*  
on tour and on Broadway



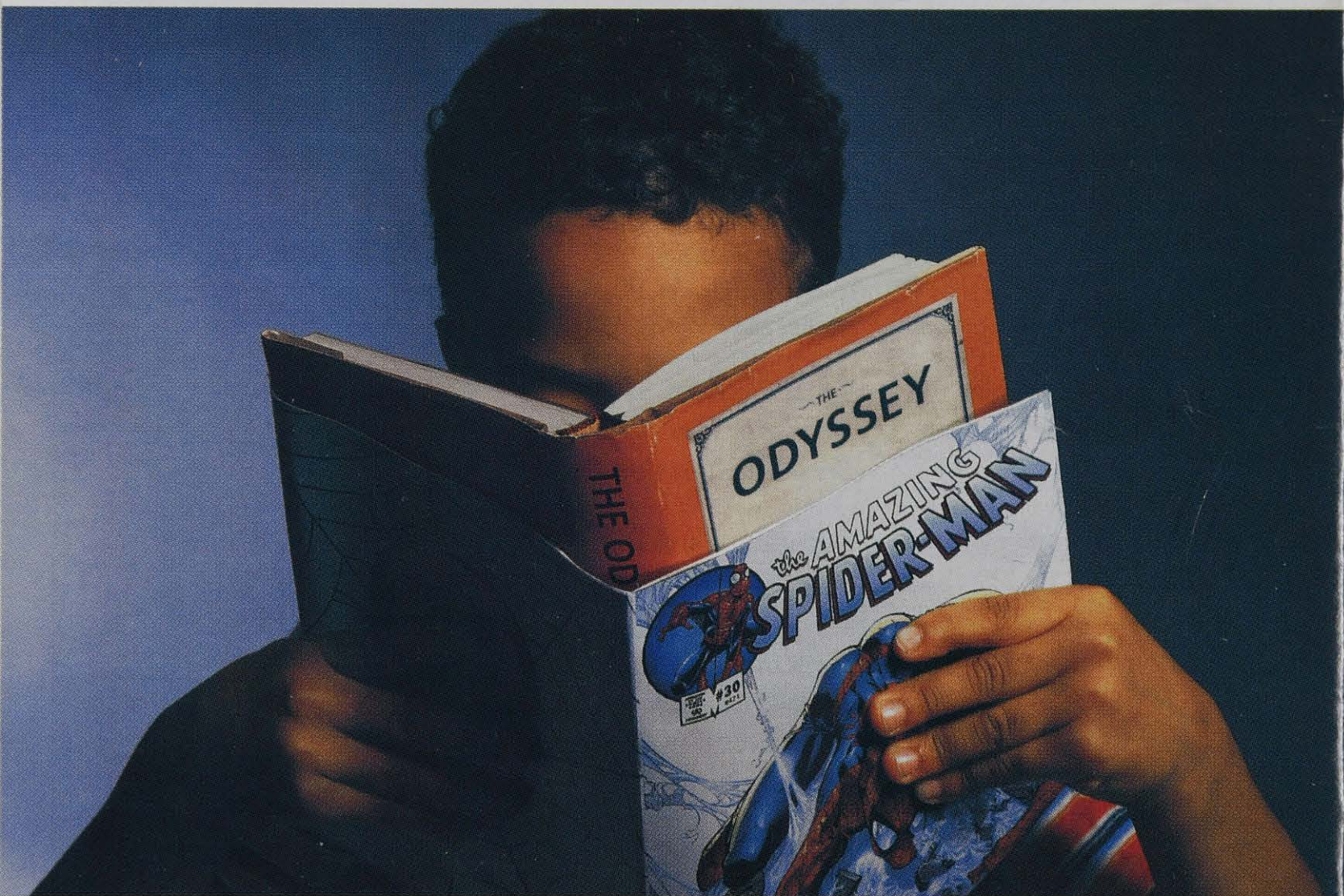
**Eddie Brandt**

Gavroche in *Les Misérables*  
on tour

How long have you been on tour?	Since October 5, 2000. [ <i>Mamma Mia!</i> opened on Broadway October 18, 2001.]	Three months.
Where's home?	Toronto, Canada.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Items you always have with you?	My laptop, a few kitchen implements (I love to cook), the <i>Zagat</i> survey for whichever city I'm going to, and photos.	Gameboy, playing cards.
First thing you do in a new city?	Find the liquor store to stock up the wine cabinet—immediately followed by finding the closest and best gym!	Jump on the beds.
Are audiences different outside New York?	I'm <i>really</i> looking forward to being able to answer that question.	Yes—they cheer more!
Any new projects in the works while on tour?	I went into the studio in L.A. and recorded two songs from <i>Mamma Mia!</i> They appear on my CD, <i>All of My Life Has Led to This</i> , which was released in September.	Not at the moment.
First thing you want to do when you get home?	I want to unpack those suitcases and put them <i>away!</i>	Play with my dog and two cats.



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That performance, with reduced orchestra and none of the dance element so essential to the full ritual-drama production you'll encounter now, already indicated how Ms. Drattell's blending of pungent declamation and long-arched lyricism—in a contemporary style free of the usual labels—effectively accommodated a tragedy dominated by the newly widowed Eve and Lilith as a creature of menace and pity.

Lilith, by the way, is no stranger to the performing arts, and she's not always a fearsome monster. In Martha Graham's erotic and witty 1958 dance, *Embattled Garden*, she protects Eve from the serpent-devil's lust by tying a red turban around Eve's head (a traditional device supposed to safeguard a young woman's virtue).

But in Ms. Drattell's score (and David Steven Cohen's libretto), Lilith is hardly Eve's buddy. The first warning of this couldn't come earlier; it begins the orchestral prelude to Act One. Bassoon, piano, and cellos slither (over a string-bass pedal-point) around a low C-F-sharp tritone—an augmented fourth interval that musical mythology has always termed "diabolical." Thus we know right off where Lilith stands in the big picture. The tritone persists through the funeral prayer sung by a son of Adam and Eve (probably Seth, surely not the now-banished Cain or the murdered Abel), the prayer accompanied by a male chorus and later joined by a daughter. When Eve appears to sing an extended lament, the higher orchestral instruments break free of the Satanic tritone and bring a loving light into the still prevailing grief.

When the son's prayer resumes and the music's intensity repels some of the mourners, Eve's disclosure that these grotesquely malformed defectors from the graveside are the children of Adam but not hers is sung at first against spiky little interjections from the orchestral winds. As Eve's story of Lilith's downfall is developed, the strings whirl softly and spookily. And when Eve finally predicts Lilith's imminent presence at the funeral, the orchestra erupts into loud, implacable chords. At Lilith's appearance, the instruments soften temporarily, only to build into a big, act-ending clamor with Lilith's boast that all of Adam and Eve's children are really hers.

As in Act One, voices and orchestra share equally in pushing the musical drama through the second and third acts. (Wagner, thou art mighty yet, as if we didn't know.) The second act opens with a Sabbath prayer, the only instance in the opera in which Ms. Drattell quotes traditional music. But the composer underlines startlingly the moment's irony by using this purely Hebraic music as background to Lilith's thoroughly repulsive activities: stealing a new-born child from a sleeping couple and sacrificing it, seducing the sleeping father by way of dream, and fleeing with his semen to give birth to one more grotesque monster.

The orchestra, having softly accompanied Lilith's caressing mantra during the seduction, soon screams from the pain of this latest childbirth. The orchestral scream awakens Eve from her dream of Lilith's crime, and Eve finds herself back at Adam's grave, against calmer music not quite negated by her worries about lost faith. Soft strings then support the spoken dialogue in which the Seer tells Eve that she and Lilith are of one soul and that she will regain her faith only if she and Lilith are united. A dark, dank "walking bass" describes Eve's travels back to Eden, where she must find Lilith by eating the garden's one remaining apple. Not quite humorously, those same strings (with clarinet) explode as if in a loud "ouch" when Eve, under the Guardian's instructions, bloodies her feet on sharp stones in order to re-enter Eden. Eve bites the apple, which brings the curtain down on an orchestral frenzy of anticipation.

During the violent prelude to Act Three, most of the string players must bow short *glissandos* with the flat hairs of their bows close to the bridge in order to "sound like a child crying." When Eve encounters Lilith and responds sympathetically to her agonized prayers, the women's uncomplicated vocal lines proceed through a gentle but rapid flow of roulades from the flutes, violins, and piano. Soon, however, when Eve and Lilith have had their brief but mutually almost obliterating sexual union, Eve somehow heeds the dead Adam's call—the male chorus representing his ghost—and responds as well to her conscience as the mother of children vulnerable to the newly vengeful Lilith. As the post-coital conflict escalates between Adam's two widows, the music intensifies fiercely. Eve's struggles with Lilith, the other half of her "broken soul," should have earned her, in a more conventional opera, a peaceful, Wagnerian closure signifying



"redemption." But in the wake of Lilith's parting curse on her and the daughters of daughters to come, Eve once again is alone at Adam's grave, able only to wander into the night as a decidedly unpeaceful, unredemptive orchestra hurls a sustained barrage of *fortissimo* chords at her and at us—the most ferocious music in the opera.

—Leighton Kerner

## Meet the Artists

**Beth Clayton**, mezzo-soprano. Birthplace: El Dorado, Arkansas. This season at NYCO: debuts as title role in *Lilith*. Career highlights: Nerone in *Agrippina* at Glimmerglass Opera; title role in *Carmen* for Welsh National Opera; Loma in Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* at Houston Grand Opera (world premiere) and San Diego Opera; Fox in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with Dallas Opera (Maria Callas Debut Award nomination) and Canadian Opera Company; Maddalena in *Rigoletto* at Santa Fe Opera; Mère Marie in *Les Dialogues des Carmelites* at Japan's Saito Kinen Festival; Nicklausse in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* in Houston; Don Ramiro in *La finta giardiniera* with Washington Opera; Bernstein's Five Songs for Orchestra with Minnesota Orchestra and Eiji Oue; Thomas Ades' *America* (world premiere) with New York Philharmonic. Upcoming engagements: Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* and Flower-maiden in *Parsifal* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Olga in *Yevgeny Onegin* at Santa Fe Opera.

**Lauren Flanigan**, soprano. Birthplace: San Francisco, California. This season at NYCO: Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Eve in *Lilith*. NYCO debut: Musetta in *La bohème*, 1991. Career Highlights: *Central Park*, *The Mother of Us All*, *Intermezzo*, *Lizzie Borden*, *Macbeth*, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Mathis der Maler*, *Esther* (world premiere), *Roberto Devereux*, and *Die tote Stadt* at NYCO; performances at La Scala, Teatro San Carlo, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Japan Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, American Symphony Orchestra, New York Chamber Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, and English National Opera; live recording of Richard Strauss' *Die Liebe der Danae* (Telarc); Betty Allen prizewinner. Upcoming engagements: *Regina* with

Florida Grand Opera, *Epiphanies* with San Francisco Symphony, *Euryanthe* with Glyndebourne (debut), Sixth Symphony of Philip Glass (world premiere) at Carnegie Hall.

**Dana Beth Miller**, soprano. Birthplace: Topeka, Kansas. This season at NYCO: debuts as Eve's Daughter/Wind in *Lilith*. Career highlights: Giorgietta in *Il tabarro*, Nella in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Bianca in *La rondine* with Des Moines Metro Opera; Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus* with San Francisco's Western Opera Theater tour; Ann Putnam in *The Crucible* with Washington Opera; High Priestess in *Aida* with Dallas Opera; Clärchen in Beethoven's *Egmont* with Cincinnati Symphony; Mrs. Hayes in *Susannah* with Kentucky Opera; Corinna in *Il viaggio a Reims* and title role in *Suor Angelica* with Cincinnati Conservatory of Music; created role of Eve's Daughter at Glimmerglass Opera; recently completed second summer with San Francisco Opera's Merola Program; prizewinner, Palm Beach Opera, Corbett Opera Scholarship, and National Opera Association competitions; several awards, Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Upcoming: title role in *Lucrezia Borgia* with Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts.

**Marcus DeLoach**, baritone. Birthplace: Newburyport, Massachusetts. This season at NYCO: Schaunard in *La bohème*, Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, Son/Serpent in *Lilith*, Pish-Tush in *The Mikado*, Moralès in *Carmen*, Sciarrone in *Tosca*. NYCO debut: Herman Atlan in *The Mother of Us All*, 2000. Career highlights: roles during five seasons at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis include Son in *The Merchant and the Pauper* (world premiere) and Schaunard; Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Santa Barbara Grand Opera; Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* at Nashville Opera; Falke in *Die Fledermaus* with San Francisco Opera



Center; first place winner, London's inaugural Wigmore Hall International Song Competition, followed by recital debut; performances with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Borromeo and Guarneri String Quartets, Martin Katz, and Warren Jones; four appearances on Marilyn Horne Foundation's *On Wings of Song* radio recital series; recording of *The Lady of the Lake* with Gerard Schwarz and Seattle Symphony.

**Tom Nelis**, actor. Birthplace: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This season at NYCO: debuts as Seer in *Lilith*. Career highlights: as founding member of SITI Co., appeared in *War of the Worlds*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *The Radio Play*; *The Medium* (Obie Award); and *Orestes*, all directed by Anne Bogart; *Dionysus* directed by Tadashi Suzuki with Suzuki Company of Toga; Ahab in Laurie Anderson's *Songs and Stories from Moby Dick* on world tour; *Tis Pity She's a Whore*, The two parts of *Henry IV*, and title role in *Henry VI* at the Public Theatre; Oscar Wilde in *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* at Minetta Lane; Richard Foreman's *Pearls for Pigs* on world tour; *Hot Mouth* at Manhattan Theatre Club; *The Trojan Women*, *Marathon Dancing*, and *Another Person Is a Foreign Country* with En Garde Arts; most recently, Volpone/Pangloss in *Candide* at the Prince Music Theater; holds an M.F.A. from UCSD.

**Deborah Drattell**, composer, *Lilith*. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. Compositions include: *Central Park: Festival of Regrets* for NYCO, Glimmerglass Opera and *Great Performances* telecast; *Lilith* (concert version) at Glimmerglass; *A Captive Spirit*, a chamber opera; *The Lost Lover* (world premiere) with New York Chamber Symphony and Lauren Flanigan; *Letters Home* based on works of Sylvia Plath, premiered at Alice Tully Hall; *Eishes Chayil*, an a cappella piece; *Love Gave It to Me*, a song cycle based on Anna Akhmatova's poetry; *Alone* based on Edgar Allan Poe poem. Recordings: *Lilith* overture, *Sorrow Is Not Melancholy* for string orchestra, *Fire Dances*, and *Syzygy*, all on Delos with Seattle Sympony; former composer-in-residence at NYCO and Glimmerglass; former director, NYCO's Showcasing American Composers project. Upcoming: *Nicholas and*

*Alexandra* (world premiere) at Los Angeles Opera for Plácido Domingo; *Best Friends*, an opera with libretto by Wendy Wasserstein; double violin concerto for Gil Shaham and Adele Anthony.

**David Steven Cohen**, librettist. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Lilith*. Career highlights: has worked in television comedy, children's television, film and radio; executive producer and wrote scripts, music, lyrics and theme song for *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss* on Nickelodeon (Emmy nominations, Writers Guild Award); songs performed by Elaine Stritch, Megan Mullally, Melanie Chartoff, and the Cat in the Hat; has collaborated with or written for Madeline Kahn, Steve Martin, George C. Scott, George Burns, Queen Latifah, Quincy Jones, *Rocky Horror Show* creator Richard O'Brien, and Pee-Wee Herman; credits as writer and or producer include *Living Single*, *Parker Lewis*, *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*, *Strangers with Candy*, *Tiny Tunes*, *ALF*, *Mr. President*, *Courage the Cowardly Dog*, and the animated feature *Balto* produced by Steven Spielberg; currently developing *Weirder Theater*, a series of new musical fables, and projects for MTV. *Lilith* is Mr. Cohen's first opera libretto.

**George Manahan**, conductor and NYCO music director. Birthplace: Atlanta, Georgia. This season at NYCO: *The Flying Dutchman*, *Macbeth*, *Turandot*, *Lilith*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Carmen*. NYCO debut: *Die tote Stadt*, 1991. Career highlights: *Xerxes*, *Falstaff*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *Il viaggio a Reims*, *The Mother of Us All*, *Partenope*, *Intermezzo*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Emmeline*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, and *Macbeth*, as well as *Tosca*, *Lizzie Borden*, and *La bohème* (Live From Lincoln Center telecasts), and more at NYCO; *Rigoletto*, *Falstaff*, and *L'italiana in Algeri* at Glimmerglass Opera; premieres at Santa Fe Opera, including *Modern Painters* and *A Night at the Chinese Opera*; productions at Seattle Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Australia, and Minnesota Opera; appearances with San Francisco Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, and Verona Filarmonica.



## NEW YORK CITY OPERA

**Anne Bogart**, director. Birthplace: Newport, Rhode Island. This season at NYCO: *Lilith*. NYCO debut: *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 1997. Career highlights: founded the SITI Company with Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki; for SITI, directed *bobrauschenbergamerica*; *Room*; *War of the Worlds*; *Cabin Pressure*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Culture of Desire*; *Bob*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Small Lives/Big Dreams*; *The Medium*; Noel Coward's *Private Lives*; August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*; and Charles Mee's *Orestes*. Recipient of two Obie Awards, a Bessie Award, and a Guggenheim fellowship; associate professor at Columbia University.

**John Conklin**, set designer. Birthplace: Hartford, Connecticut. This season at NYCO: *Macbeth*, *Agrippina*, *The Glass Blowers*, *Lilith*. NYCO debut: Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* in 1966. Career highlights: *The Turn of the Screw*, *Rigoletto*, *Partenope*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Lizzie Borden*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, and *Falstaff* at NYCO and Glimmerglass; *Orfeo ed Euridice* at NYCO and English National Opera; *Ariodante*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *Carmina Burana*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *Die Soldaten*, *From the House of the Dead*, *Mathis der Maler*, and *Il turco in Italia* at NYCO; *The Glass Blowers*, *Agrippina*, and many other productions for Glimmerglass, where he is currently assistant artistic director; productions for Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, San Francisco Opera, Scottish Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Bayerische Staatsoper, and Netherlands Opera; teaches at New York University. Upcoming: *Norma* at the Met.

**James Schuette**, costume designer. Birthplace: Manitowoc, Wisconsin. This season at NYCO: *La bohème* and *Lilith*. NYCO debut: *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 1997. Career Highlights: set and/or costume designs for *La bohème* at NYCO (PBS telecast) and Glimmerglass; *Transatlantic* with James Robinson at Minnesota Opera; Laurie Anderson's *Songs and Stories from Moby Dick*; *Carmen* at Santa Fe Opera; *Bob*, *Room*, *War of the Worlds*, *Alice's Adventures*, *Culture of Desire*, *Private Lives*, and *The Adding Machine* with Anne Bogart and SITI

Co.; *Floyd Collins*, *Saturn Returns*, *Time to Burn*, *Space*, *Berlin Circle*, *Trojan Women: A Love Story*, *Stonewall*, and *Orestes* with Tina Landau; productions for Steppenwolf, Old Globe, Goodman, New York Theatre Workshop, the Public, Prince Music Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Brooklyn Academy of Music.

**Christopher Akerlind**, lighting designer. Birthplace: Hartford, Connecticut. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Lilith*. Career highlights: extensive opera credits including productions at Boston Lyric, Dallas, Glimmerglass, Minnesota, and Santa Fe, as well as Opera Theater of Saint Louis, where he is resident designer; New York credits include the premieres of Caryl Churchill's *The Skryker* and *Mad Forest*, Craig Lucas' *The Dying Gaul*, Tony Kushner's *Slavs!*, Charles Busch's *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, Howard Korder's *The Lights*, and August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* (Tony Award nomination); recent international productions include *Cymbeline* for Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon, *The Tale of Genji* at Nissay Theater in Tokyo, and *Boris Godunov* for Hamburgische Staatsoper; regional theater productions at A.C.T., A.R.T., Berkeley Rep, Goodman, Guthrie, Hartford Stage, Intiman Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Long Wharf, the McCarter, Seattle Rep, and SITI; recipient of Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Lighting Design.

The **SITI Company**, celebrating its tenth year of activity, is an ensemble-based theater company based in New York City. The company's mission is to create new works for the theater, to perform and tour these productions nationally and internationally, to provide ongoing training for young theater professionals, and to foster opportunities for cultural exchange with theater professionals and audiences from all over the world. SITI Company productions include *The Medium*; *Small Lives/Big Dreams*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Culture of Desire*; *Bob*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Cabin Pressure*; *War of the Worlds—The Radio Play*; *War of the Worlds*; *Room*; and *bobrauschenbergamerica*. Upcoming productions include *Score*, *Fetes de la nuit*, and *Reunion*.



# ON STAGE AT CITY OPERA



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### 2001 FALL SEASON

THU	NOV 1	ULYSSES
FRI	NOV 2	BOHÈME
SATmat	NOV 3	TURANDOT
SAT	NOV 3	FLUTE
SUNmat	NOV 4	ULYSSES
WED	NOV 7	ULYSSES
THU	NOV 8	TURANDOT
FRI	NOV 9	FLUTE
SATmat	NOV 10	BOHÈME
SAT	NOV 10	TURANDOT
SUNmat	NOV 11	LILITH
TUES	NOV 13	BOHÈME
WED	NOV 14	TURANDOT
THU	NOV 15	LILITH
FRI	NOV 16	TURANDOT
SATmat	NOV 17	LILITH
SAT	NOV 17	FLUTE
SUNmat	NOV 18	TURANDOT

### 2002 SPRING SEASON

FRI	MARCH 1	PORGY
SATmat	MARCH 2	PORGY
SAT	MARCH 2	PORGY
SUNmat	MARCH 3	PORGY
THU	MARCH 7	PORGY
FRI	MARCH 8	PORGY
SATmat	MARCH 9	PORGY
SAT	MARCH 9	PORGY
SUNmat	MARCH 10	GIOVANNI
TUES	MARCH 12	PORGY

Spring performances continue through April 28.



written a beautiful libretto. It's minimalist and sparse—which gave me a lot of freedom. Each word is meaningful and powerful but never precious.



JOHN NATION

**Anne Bogart directs *Lilith* at NYCO.**

**STAGEBILL:** Anne, when did you come on board with the project?

**BOGART:** Deborah and I met a couple of years ago—through Lauren, with whom I first worked in the late 1980s at Music-Theater Group on a chamber version of Massenet's *Cendrillon*.

**DRATTELL:** I had originally wanted Anne to direct an opera of mine about the Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva.

**BOGART:** I think Deborah's role in my life is to introduce me to interesting subject matter. *Lilith* is completely new territory for me. It's an introduction to the story—which I knew nothing about—and to music that interests me, and to the Jewish Orthodox

tradition. I went to synagogue with Deborah, and the first thing that I said when I came out of that service was, "Oh, so praying is a physical act." And Deborah said—

**DRATTELL:** "Yes, it's your whole body!" I really love the fact that you are coming to the work with fresh eyes, with an openness to the culture, without prejudice.

**BOGART:** The reason I am in the art form is to enter a new world. I don't think I would have agreed to direct *Lilith* if I had grown up in the Jewish Orthodox faith. I would have said, "Oh, I know that already."

**DRATTELL:** I don't want to sound reverse-prejudiced, but I really wanted a woman director for *Lilith*.

**BOGART:** That's not reverse prejudice. It's an aesthetic choice.

**DRATTELL:** Some people may say, "Why can't a man direct it?" But in writing this piece, as a female, I brought a certain sensibility to it. It's not something tangible that I can put into words. People sometimes say that the music sounds like it's written by a man. What does that mean? I've heard it said, "Well, like it's really rhythmic and pounding." If it's pounding it sounds like a man? When people ask me, "Are you a woman composer?" I always respond, "I'm a composer and I'm a woman." This is who I am, and I bring something to my work.

**STAGEBILL:** Anne, you are renowned for your dance-movement productions. Several of your company members at the Saratoga International Theater Institute [SITI] are part of the *Lilith* ensemble. Do you find you have to change gears when you direct opera singers?

**BOGART:** I think that *Lilith* asks for post-modern movement.

**DRATTELL:** *Lilith* is conceived as an opera with dance. Movement permeates the whole piece—the male chorus is omnipresent—and that's why it's so essential to have Anne's company [members of SITI] and to have a great artist like Lauren, whose movement is so expressive.



**BOGART:** One of the reasons I love working with opera singers is because of a moment that invariably happens early in rehearsals, when we're trying to make a decision about a movement. A singer will ask, "Should I pick this up?" And I say, "On what note should you pick up the book?" [*Bogart pretends to be a singer.*] "What? You want me to tell you on what note to pick up the book?" "Well, yes, you have a lot more training in music. Can you tell me where it would be funniest?" "Well, it would be funny if you picked it up here," the singer responds. And then something switches, and the habit of waiting for someone to tell the singer what to do switches into an active culture in the rehearsal room. A lot of the singers I work with don't expect to be asked if what they feel intuitively is right at any particular moment—and to watch that spark ignite is the reason I'm in the business. As much as I adore working with my company—we have a shorthand for creating work fast—it's also wonderful to watch that kind of culture spread in an opera rehearsal room.

I actually want actors to work more like opera singers in some ways. The way an opera singer has to reach for a kind of heroic level of articulation where they go inside themselves to find a certain sound, I want an actor to do that physically. I think the physical virtuosity for an actor and the vocal virtuosity for a singer somehow interrelate.

**STAGEBILL:** *Lauren Flanigan is known for both her physical and vocal virtuosity.*

**DRATTELL:** Lauren has an intensity that's so powerful. She's one of the reasons I was drawn to opera. I keep thinking that making an opera is like a marriage. If it's a good marriage, it's about the discovery—and you know, things just click. In an opera you have all these accomplished people who have a very definite aesthetic and ideas; you can understand each other's language and you come together in a unifying idea. It's different for every project that you work on. When I heard what you and John Conklin,



**Serpentine: Lilith by John Collier**

the set designer, were planning for *Lilith*, I just loved it. Yet I never said specifically to either of you, "Make it minimalist." We simply didn't have that discussion.

I've been working on *Lilith* for so long and I have very specific ideas, but now I've got to give it over to the artists. I love that part—I love the fact that it is a collaboration. And I feel very lucky to be working with really great artists.

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*Rebecca Paller has written about the arts for numerous publications including Vogue, Opera News, American Theatre, and Opera.*



# Shopping with Julie Kent

## The Cast

**Julie Kent** Principal Dancer for American Ballet Theatre

**Warren Christopher** Personal Shopper for *Stagebill*

## Time and Place

Present day. New York.

## Act I

A few weeks before the opening of *The Nutcracker* at the Kennedy Center, Julie sets aside some time from her hectic rehearsal schedule to shop with Warren for something she takes very seriously: shoes! And while Julie doesn't think she has a shoe fetish, her husband, ABT's principal dancer Victor Barbee, would disagree. The story begins at her favorite shoe store, **Varda** on Spring Street in SoHo. Julie loves the collection because the shoes are both comfortable and very stylish.

## Act II

Julie and Warren soon head uptown to **Saks Fifth Avenue**. They make a beeline for the fourth floor Designer Shoe Salon. Gucci, Prada, and Tod's are only a few of the high-fashion collections she's excited to see. The pair she wants most are the ballerina shoes from Ferragamo (what else?). This season, Saks has plenty of patent leather shoes and tall shaft boots to pick from, so, of course, they don't leave empty-handed.

## Act III

Julie and Warren take a detour through the cosmetics department on the main floor of Saks to browse through the new collection of makeup by **Giorgio Armani** (it's exclusive to Saks Fifth Avenue in New York and San Francisco). Eye shadow, fluid sheers, foundations, blushes, and powders—everything in the collection reflects the high-end sophistication that Giorgio Armani is known for. With almost 155 shades to pick from, the two shoppers agonize over just the right ones for Julie to wear on opening night at the Kennedy Center, December 5.

## Epilogue

The best thing about being *Stagebill's* personal shopper is discovering secrets about the person you shop with. For instance, Julie loves to paint her nails in the colors she thinks her characters would wear. For *Cinderella*, her toenails had a glittery sheen. When she performed *Giselle* they were a soft pink, and in the *Leaves Are Fading*, a striking shade of green. My apologies to Julie—some secrets are just too hard to keep!

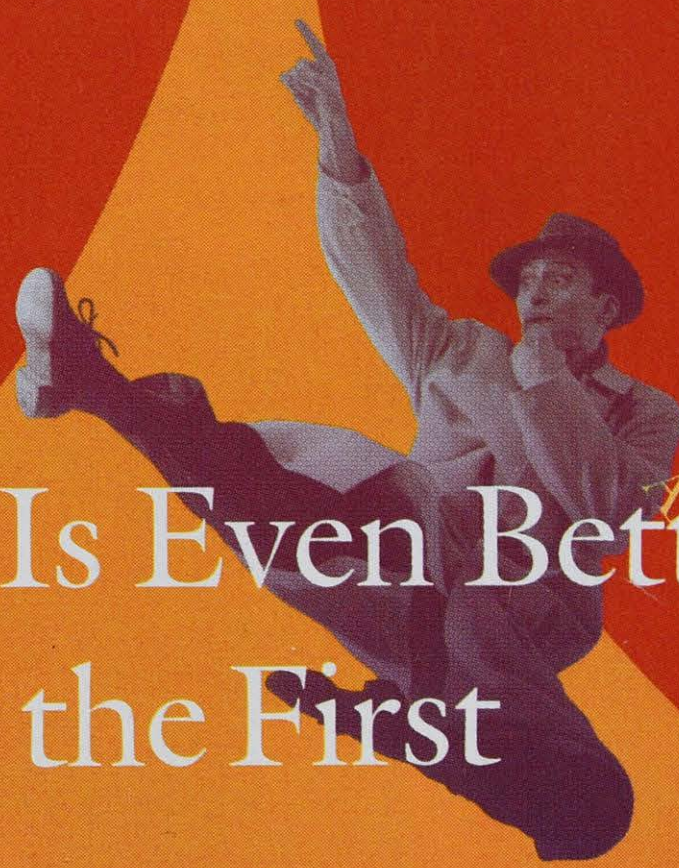
## Curtain Down

Warren Christopher is the Style Editor for *Yahoo! Internet Life Magazine*.



DAVID STREET





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NEW PRODUCTION

When Carlo Gozzi turned a fable into his play *Turandot*, he was trying to revive Italian theater and save *commedia dell'arte*. Little did he know that Puccini would use the story for his own lyric ends.

BY JOHN LOUIS  
DIGAETANI

*Ice princess:  
Scenes from  
NYCO's production  
of Turandot*

# Gozzi, Puccini, and *Turandot*



If we know the name Carlo Gozzi at all, it's probably because a number of his plays were made into opera librettos. In many ways, Gozzi's *fiabe*, or fairy-tale plays, seem born to be opera libretti since they, too, often depend on another art form to complete them: They were tailored for the improvisational skills of players in Antonio Sacchi's *commedia dell'arte* company.

Gozzi (1720–1806) was the most successful playwright in late 18th-century Venice, and wrote, in addition to many plays, important works of prose and poetry. He is also remembered as the man who tried to save *commedia dell'arte*, Italy's beloved form of popular, improvisational theater, from reformers such as Carlo Goldoni.

Goldoni's theatrical war with Gozzi was possibly the best-publicized literary feud of that quarrelsome century. When Gozzi won the day, with his successful *The Love of Three Oranges* (1761), Goldoni, no longer able to make a living in Venice, moved to France. In the long term, Goldoni triumphed; his plays became more popular after his death, and today they are more frequently staged than Gozzi's.

The Gozzi-Goldoni dispute raises more substantial questions than the matter of who won or lost it. For both playwrights, the theater was a most serious pursuit. The theater was then a weapon to defend the purity of the Italian language; to define the traditions of the Italian stage; to protect the reputations of Italy's greatest actors; and to project the truthful image of the Italian society and nation. (Have theater or opera been taken so seriously, by either patrons or practitioners, since?)

It is opera—that most artificial of Western theatrical forms—through which Gozzi became influential and is best remembered.

We know that Gozzi's *fiabe* were performed in Vienna and influenced the Viennese magic plays and Singspiels of the late 18th century, most notably Mozart and Schikaneder's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791).

For the Germans, Gozzi was a harbinger of Romanticism. And in the 19th century, the German Romantics were attracted to Gozzi's interest in myths and dreams. Such artists as Wagner, Goethe, Schiller, the Grimm Brothers, and E.T.A. Hoffmann became fascinated with fairy tales and

considered their mythic possibilities for a new art. Wagner's first opera, *Die Feen* (1834), was based on Gozzi's *La donna serpente* (1762). Although the composer later dismissed it as juvenilia, *Die Feen* signals Wagner's early interest in myth, which continued and grew, shifting its focus to Nordic and Germanic legends.

Ironically, the *fiabe* of the conservative Gozzi were embraced by radical 20th-century artists seeking to shake up the theater. Mascagni's *Le maschere* (1901), an opera about a *commedia* troupe, uses characters from Gozzi's plays. Ferruccio Busoni wrote two *commedia* operas, *Turandot* (1917) and *Arlecchino* (1917), which are still occa-

sionally staged. In 1956, Hans Werner Henze adapted Gozzi's *Il re cervo* as *König Hirsch*.

Perhaps the most illustrious operatic use of Gozzi and *commedia* is Puccini's *Turandot* (1926). Puccini had long held an interest in mythology; his first opera, *Le Villi* (1884), was based on the German legend of the Willis, young women betrayed in love who die and return to haunt their faithless lovers. (Variants on the legend appear in the ballets *Giselle* and *La Sylphide*.) As Puccini matured as a composer, his operas grew



CAROL ROSEGG



increasingly mythic in themes and subjects; *La fanciulla del West* (1910) contains parallels to the Nibelung myth and *Il trittico* (1918) uses water and light in mythic ways.

The conflicts in *Turandot*, Gozzi's most famous *fiaba*, between masculinity and femininity and between social classes, inspire masterful equivalents in Puccini's opera.

However, Gozzi's Princess Turandot is far more human than Puccini's pathologically icy princess. Puccini's Turandot has more in common with the heroine of Friedrich Schiller's 1804 translation of Gozzi's *Turandot*. In Schiller's play, the mythic and abstract dimensions are emphasized; characters emerge as less realistic and more symbolic of primal forces in human nature. Puccini's librettists, Adami and Simoni, tried to balance the original Gozzi play with Schiller's later translation. Gozzi's weaker but far more human Adelma becomes the suffering Liù in Puccini's opera.

Puccini's Princess seems to be a neurotic murderer, causing the execution of the Prince of Persia and the suicide of Liù, and adding a nightmarish quality to the tale. Although such things reflect Gozzi's 18th-century misogyny, his Turandot eventually becomes a spokesperson for women's liberation. Turandot, in both Gozzi and Puccini, finally accepts Prince Calaf's love and praises love itself.

Puccini's *Turandot* hews to Schiller's version in the famous riddle scene; in Gozzi, the answers to the riddles are "the Sun," "the Year," and "the Lion of St. Mark"; in Puccini and Schiller they are "Hope," "Blood," and "Turandot." However, Puccini's nocturnal settings and bloodthirsty chorus, with their surreal quality, are pure Gozzi.

In his effort to revive *commedia dell'arte*, Gozzi injected *commedia* characters like Pan-

talone, Truffaldino, and Brighella into his *Turandot*. Puccini gives them Chinese names (Ping, Pang, and Pong) yet they remain comic, as in Gozzi, commenting on the action. While high-born characters like Calaf and Turandot articulate their noble ideas in

poetry, the *commedia* characters speak in prose and take earthy approaches to life. Gozzi's Calaf speaks of his wonderful princess, but the *commedia* characters tell him she's a piece of meat—and one you can't even eat!

Gozzi's unusual juxtaposition of tragic seriousness with slapstick comedy resonates with contemporary sensibilities. In many ways, Gozzi's plays prefigured the bitter modern comedy of the Theater of the Absurd. So it's not surprising that our era has given Gozzi some notable productions, re-creating the appropriate improvisa-

tional style.

The Russian director Yevgeny Vakhtangov mounted a 1922 production of *Turandot* in Moscow, and Bertolt Brecht produced a version in 1956. During the 1980s, director Andrei Serban skillfully juggled Gozzi's theatrical elements in fine productions of the Gozzi plays at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Gozzi's *The Green Bird* triumphed off-Broadway in 1996 and on Broadway in 2000 in Julie Taymor's imaginative production. Obviously, Gozzi's unique balance of myth and reality, comedy and tragedy, can still entertain and fascinate audiences.

---

*John L. DiGaetani, a Professor of English at Hofstra University, has translated the three major plays of Carlo Gozzi, and is the author of Carlo Gozzi: A Life in the 18th Century Venetian Theater, An Afterlife in Opera.*



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leather and lace and took part in a suggestive "ballet" at Flora's party in Act II.

Ledbetter is also ready and willing to revamp a well-honed cameo. For many seasons, Ledbetter has played Alcindoro in *La bohème* as a lovable but terribly embarrassed man with the funniest "spit-take" in opera. The current City Opera production finds him in an abusive relationship with Musetta; he has been directed to give her a resounding slap across the face just before she sings her charming waltz.

This season's production of *The Mikado*, which originated at the English National Opera, requires Yule and Lankston to alter their familiar characterizations: This *Mikado* is not set in Imperial Japan but in an English seaside resort in the 1930's, and the Mikado himself is a pompous gentleman reminiscent of Sidney Greenstreet.

The term *comprimario* does not describe all of the roles Lankston, Ledbetter, and Yule have performed over the years, nor does it indicate the range of skills they bring to their work. NYCO has always presented a repertory that goes far beyond the confines of many other opera companies, and so the need for "character men" with musical-comedy experience has been great. All three are steeped in the lore of the theater, perform in a wide variety of languages and styles, and are gifted actors. Lankston is also a talented dancer. They have proven to be strong assets in successful productions of music-theater pieces that most opera companies avoid.

All three began performing at an early age and have worked steadily in a variety of musi-

cal genres since their teens. While each had plenty of formal training, nothing seems to have prepared them for their careers at City

Opera like their years in stock companies where a new work is rehearsed during the day while another is performed at night. Ledbetter and Yule met and roomed together while performing an English version of *Così fan tutte* with such a company. Lankston's first big break in New York came in 1964, when he was chosen to play the Ziegfeld tenor, alongside Barbra Streisand, in the original Broadway cast of *Funny Girl*.

Each of the three played a number of characters in NYCO's

acclaimed production and recording of the opera-house version of Bernstein's *Candide*. Lankston has appeared in the leading role of Dr. Pangloss, as well as portraying five other characters, slipping in and out of them as if from one robe to another. "And quickly, too," he adds, "thanks to the miracle of Velcro and a team of dressers in the wings."

Obviously, a phenomenal memory is required to learn and retain such a large and diverse repertoire, as well as nerves of steel to cover roles and go on at a moment's notice. "Going on as a cover, without the advantage of stage and orchestra rehearsals, is a little like being shot out of a cannon," observes NYCO conductor Steve Mosteller. "But when one of these guys goes on, I know I can relax."

Away from the theater, Lankston, Ledbetter, and Yule relish vintage recordings of the great singers and devote themselves to a variety of hobbies. Yule enjoys mending clocks and music boxes, while Lankston devotes much of his spare time to antiquing



**Crash: John Lankston (right) as Dr. Pangloss with Cris Groenendaal in NYCO's *Candide***

CAROL ROSEGG



and exercise. Ledbetter pursues a pastime that benefits many of his fellow performers: he makes wine.

"The nature of the theater is so ephemeral," remarks Fred Grzyb, wardrobe supervisor at NYCO. "It's such a blessing to have the constancy of these artists who give their entire careers to a repertory ensemble like ours. These fellows thrive on variety and we have audience members who return season after season to see them in new roles."

All have performed countless times with such NYCO legends as Beverly Sills, Norman Treigle, and José Carreras, as well as many other international stars. Ledbetter was on hand to sing Sharpless when a young tenor named Plácido Domingo made his New York debut in NYCO's *Madama Butterfly* in 1965.

Outside of City Opera, Ledbetter has appeared in *Lohengrin* at Tanglewood under

the baton of Erich Leinsdorf. Lankston has sung Loge in *Das Rheingold* at Artpark and recently returned to Broadway to reprise his roles in a revival of *Candide*. Yule demonstrated his considerable vocal and dramatic range as the Grand Inquisitor in New York Grand Opera's recent performance of Verdi's *Don Carlos* in Central Park.

Any of the three might have been tempted to concentrate on a specialty and move on to the international opera scene. But luckily for a generation of NYCO audiences, they have preferred to remain close to home with friends and family—including their large and appreciative extended family at New York City Opera.

---

*Neil Eddinger has been a baritone in NYCO's regular chorus since 1981, and has lectured on opera at NYCO, at Sarasota Opera, and for Elderhostel.*



**Street scene: William Ledbetter, kneeling in cloak, as Alcindoro in *La bohème* at New York City Opera.**





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# PORGY & BESS

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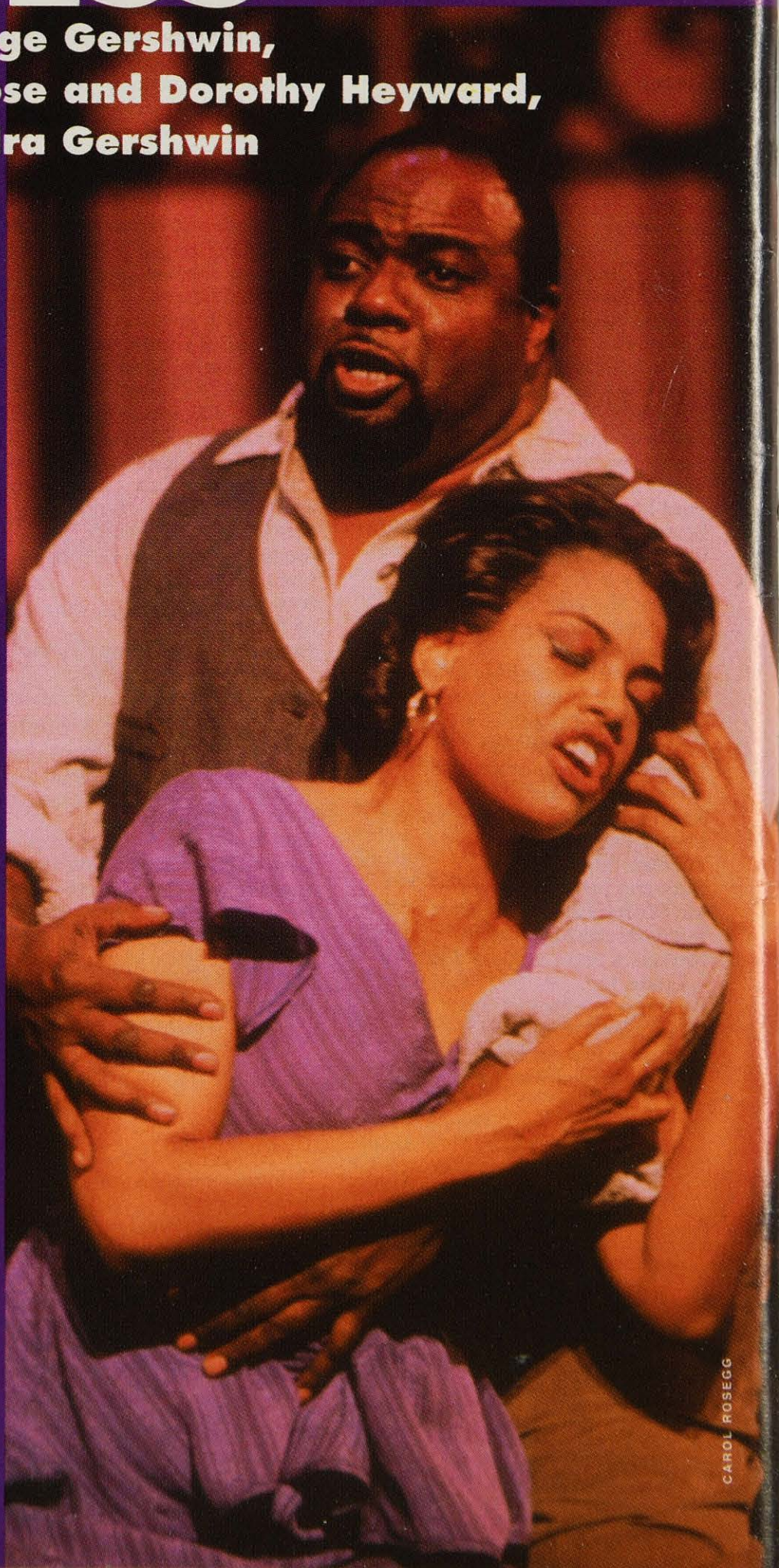
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Featuring the triumphant return of **Alvy Powell** and **Marquita Lister** as Porgy and Bess.

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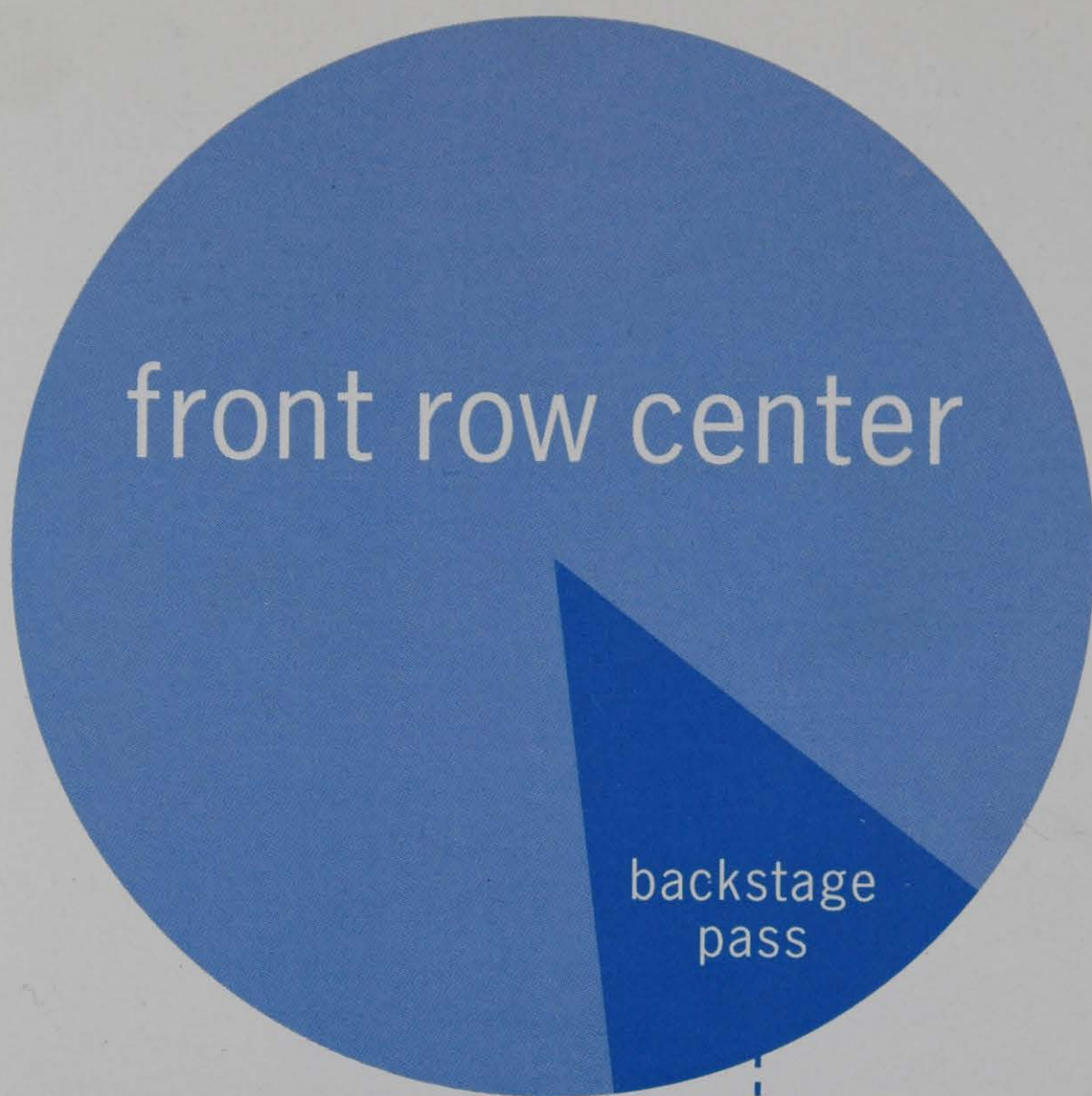
—Opera News

*Porgy and Bess* opens March 1 and runs for 14 performances only through March 22. For tickets, order online at [www.nycopera.com](http://www.nycopera.com), call Ticketmaster at (212) 307-4100, or visit the New York State Theater Box Office.



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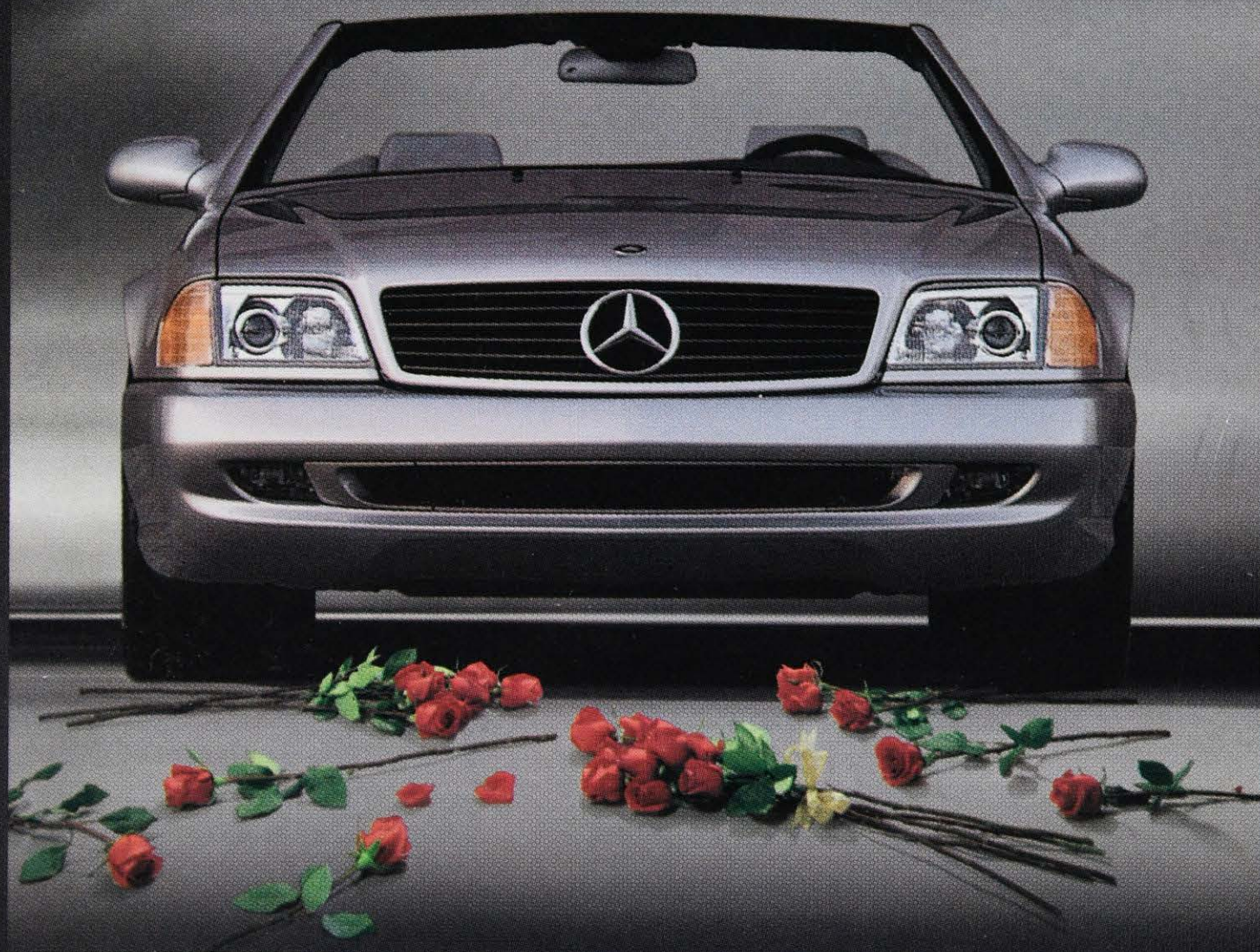
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