

# Figaro's 458th marriage at the Met



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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If there's one wedding you can't miss, it's Figaro's in Mozart's sumptuous and enormously popular opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, which gets a Spanish makeover for The Met: Live in HD screening at Cinema Nouveau theatres from 22 November.



This is the first time since 1941 that Mozart's comedy in which various romantic entanglements complicate the nuptial plans of Figaro and his bride-to-be, the clever housemaid Susanna, has been chosen to open the Metropolitan Opera season.

*The Marriage of Figaro* (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) has been presented at the Met 458 times since 1894, making it one of the most frequently performed operas in the standard repertory. It is conducted by Met Music Director James Levine, who has conducted 67 performances of *Figaro*, more than any other conductor in company history.

## Set in late-1920s' Seville

Richard Eyre's staging of *The Marriage of Figaro*, his third Met collaboration with set and costume designer Rob Howell, sets the opera in late-1920s' Seville. Eyre is the winner of five Olivier Awards for stage productions in London and his Broadway credits include: *Private Lives*, *Mary Poppins*, *Vincent in Brixton*, *The Crucible*, *Amy's View*, and *Judas Kiss*. He has also directed numerous films, including the Oscar-nominated *Iris* (2001) and *Notes on a Scandal* (2006).

Eyre made his Met debut in the 2009/10 season with an acclaimed production of *Carmen* that returns to the repertory this season and will be screened at Cinema Nouveau from 29 November, starring Ildar Abdrazakov, who sings the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Russian bass-baritone Abdrazakov made his company role debut as Figaro in 2012 and also sang the role last season at the Mariinsky in St Petersburg. His other starring roles at the Met have included the title character in last season's new production of Borodin's *Prince Igor*; the title role in the Met premiere of Verdi's *Attila*, conducted by Riccardo Muti; Masetto, Leporello, and the title character in Don Giovanni; Dosifei in Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*; Enrico in the Met premiere of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*; and the Four Villains in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

Marlis Petersen, who sings the clever housemaid Susanna, made her Met debut in 2005 as Adele in Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. In 2010, she agreed at short notice to step in for an ailing colleague to sing the challenging role of Ophélie in a new production of Thomas's *Hamlet*. Later that season, she sang her first Met performances of the title role in Berg's *Lulu*. In recent seasons, she has sung Susanna with Los Angeles Opera and the Salzburg Festival.



## Trouser role

American mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, who plays the trouser role of the feisty page Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*, first sang the role at the Met in 2009 and has also performed the role at the Glyndebourne Festival and Paris Opera. Last season, she sang Dorabella in an acclaimed Met revival of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, conducted by Levine. Her other Met roles have included Blanche de la Force in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Miranda in the company premiere of Thomas Adès' *The Tempest*, and Rosina in the premiere of the abridged, English-language holiday presentation of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*-a role she sings in its full-length Italian version later this season. She is the winner of both the Met's 2011 Beverly Sills Artist Award and the 2013 Richard Tucker Award.

Swedish baritone Peter Mattei, who sings Figaro's lecherous employer Count Almaviva, made his Met debut as the Count in 2002 and returned to reprise the role in 2005. He has also sung the Count with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Bavarian State Opera; and San Francisco Opera. His numerous Met performances have included the title role in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Amfortas in the new production premiere of Wagner's *Parsifal*, Figaro in the new production premiere of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and Shishkov in the Met premiere of Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*. Later this season, he will reprise the title role in *Don Giovanni*, a role he sang in the opera's 2011 new production premiere.

American soprano Amanda Majeski, who makes her Met debut as the long-suffering Countess Almaviva, sung the Countess with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Dresden Opera, and the Glyndebourne Festival. Her other recent performances include Donna Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Opera Philadelphia, Vitellia in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* at Zurich Opera, and the title role in Dvorák's *Rusalka* at Frankfurt Opera.



## Interviews during the intermission

A major bonus for this screening of *The Marriage of Figaro* is that the transmission (filmed on 18 October) is hosted by

soprano Renée Fleming, who also conducts interviews during the intermission.

Since The Met Live in HD series launched in 2006, more than 13 million tickets have been sold to opera lovers worldwide in more than 2000 theatres in 68 countries around the world.

*There are only four screenings of The Marriage of Figaro; November 22 and December 2 at 5pm; November 23 at 2.30pm; November 25 and December 3 at 11.30am and on December 4 at 5.30pm. It is showing at select Ster-Kinekor cinemas, including Blue Route in Cape Town, Garden Route Mall in George and Bedford Centre in Joburg. The approximate running time is 3hrs, 52mins, with one intermission.*

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## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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