

Cyberspace is alive with the sound of music with more free opera streamings from the Met Opera

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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Catch these free music and opera streamings from the Met Opera this weekend.

Puccini raises the temperature to boiling by lavishing the legendary tale with some of his finest and most spectacular music - not to mention "Nessun Dorma", one of the catalogue's most beloved arias from *Turandot* (14 August). Combined with Franco Zeffirelli's breathtakingly opulent production, it makes for one of opera's greatest experiences. A legendary Chinese princess presents each new suitor with a series of riddles; success will win her hand, but failure costs his head. One brave warrior prince rises to the challenge, determined to thaw Turandot's frozen heart. This golden production stars the great dramatic soprano Nina Stemme as Turandot, the icy Chinese princess who has renounced all men. Marco Berti is Calàf, the unknown prince who solves Turandot's riddles and wins her love. Anita Hartig sings Liù, the faithful slave girl who gives her life to save Calàf and Alexander Tsymbalyuk is Timur. Paolo Carignani conducts.

Inspired by Wagner's own tortured affair with the wife of his patron, the searing masterwork *Tristan und Isolde* (15 August) is based on Arthurian legend and tells of an illicit romance between a Breton nobleman and the Irish princess betrothed to his uncle and king. The composer's larger-than-life sensibilities are on full display throughout the score: Along with intoxicating orchestral music that surges in tandem with the couple's burgeoning passion and a chord left symbolically unresolved until the last moments of the opera, the opera also features one of the repertory's most soaring and ecstatic final climaxes, as Isolde surrenders to a love so powerful that she transcends life itself. James Levine's love for this monumental opera shimmers throughout this exciting performance. It was an afternoon to remember: Met favourite Deborah Voigt singing her first run as the proud Irish princess opposite tenor Robert Dean Smith - making an astonishing Met debut in front of a live worldwide movie-theatre audience. Michelle DeYoung was a sisterly Brangäne and Matti Salminen an imposing King Marke.

As classic as opera gets: *La Boheme* (16 August) is the most-performed work in Met history, in Franco Zeffirelli's beloved staging, the most-performed production in Met history. An archetypal tragedy filled with gorgeous and deeply affecting music, Puccini's timeless tale of love, camaraderie, jealousy and loss in the garrets and cafés of bohemian Paris has reliably enchanted audiences and left them in tears since its 1896 premiere. A new generation of rising stars shines in Franco Zeffirelli's classic production of Puccini's most popular opera. Vittorio Grigolo is the poor poet Rodolfo who falls head over heels for his neighbour, the seamstress Mimì, sung by the radiant Kristine Opolais. Susanna Phillips is the flirtatious Musetta, Massimo Cavaletti is her sweetheart Marcello and Patrick Carfizzi as Schaunard and Oren Gradus as Colline complete the ensemble. Stefano Ranzani conducts.

This gripping opera *Luisa Miller* (17 August) kicked off Verdi's staggering 'middle period' and gave the opera world its first glimpse of the composer's burgeoning genius. The tale of a pious and naive Tyrolean maiden in love with the wrong villager, the opera includes several trademarks Verdi features: a soaring aria for the lead tenor, a nuanced and poignant father-daughter relationship for baritone and soprano and a sublime third act that ends in tragedy. Renata Scotto is the innocent Luisa, very much in love with Rodolfo (Plácido Domingo in one of his best roles). But he turns out to be the son of Count Walter (Bonaldo Giaiotti), who has other plans for his aristocratic boy. Enter the evil Wurm (James Morris) whose blackmail eventually backfires, destroying the young lovers despite everything Luisa's father (Sherrill Milnes in a superb performance) does to protect her. James Levine's affectionate conducting and director Nathaniel Merrill's production help make this a performance to treasure.

Luc Bondy's dramatic production of Puccini's operatic thriller *Tosca* (18 August) stars Patricia Racette in the title role of the jealous diva, opposite Roberto Alagna as her lover, Cavaradossi, the painter whose political ideals lead them both into tragedy. George Gagnidze is Scarpia, the villainous chief of police who wants Tosca for himself. Riccardo Frizza leads the Met's musical forces in this powerful verismo score.

This sumptuous production by Piero Faggioni (set by Ezio Frigerio and costumes by Franca Squarciapino) seduced Met audiences into the enchanting world of Zandonai's rarely heard opera *Francesca da Rimini* (19 August). His retelling of Dante's story of the immortal passion of Paolo and Francesca in 13th century Italy is as musically elegant and beautiful as the details of the production on stage. James Levine's fervent conducting galvanises the fabulous cast: Renata Scotto and

Plácido Domingo as the lovers with Cornell MacNeil as an appropriately brutal Giovanni.

When Deborah Warner's production of *Eugene Onegin* (20 August) opened the Met season in 2013, soprano Anna Netrebko had only recently begun singing the role of Tatiana, however, when she returned to the part at the Met a few years later, her dramatic approach, like that of the character herself, had grown over time.

With a smouldering vocal performance, Netrebko embodies the nuanced aspects of Tatiana's personality - growing from a girl in the blossom of youth into an elegant, cosmopolitan princess. Opposite her, Peter Mattei sings the title role, a nonplussed aristocrat who discovers the power of love too late, with a rich, supple baritone. As the ardent poet Lenski, bright-voiced tenor Alexey Dolgov offers a heartbreaking portrayal. Elena Maximova is Lenski's carefree lover Olga, and bass Stefan Kocán delivers a moving performance as the ageing Prince Gremin. Maestro Robin Ticciati leads the Met Orchestra and Chorus in a textured reading of Tchaikovsky's beloved score.

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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

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