



**2008 Season Casting Updates
Cincinnati Opera Summer Festival
June 11–July 27, 2008**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jennifer Bellin

Telephone: (513) 768-5504

E-mail: jbellin@cincinnatiopera.org

**Cincinnati Opera Celebrates 88th Summer Festival
with Four Enchanting Operas**

**Stunning, New, Million Dollar *Traviata*
Makes World Premiere in Cincinnati**

**Magical New York City Opera *Madame Butterfly* Production
that Thrilled Nation on PBS Live On Cincinnati Opera's Stage**

**Sarah Coburn Stars as Lucie
in Donizetti's *Lucie de Lammermoor***

**Daniel Catán's 1996 Hit Spanish Opera *Florencia en el Amazonas*,
Makes its Midwest Debut**

Evening Performances Begin at 7:30 p.m.

CINCINNATI—Cincinnati Opera is pleased to announce casting and production updates for its 88th Summer Festival Season. Classic repertoire includes Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (**June 11, 13, & 15m**) and Verdi's tragic love story *La Traviata* (**July 23, 25, & 27m**). Cincinnati Opera will present a fresh look at Donizetti's masterpiece, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, with his beautiful French version, *Lucie de Lammermoor* (**June 26 & 28**). The season will include the company's first opera in Spanish with the Cincinnati premiere of Daniel Catán's magical *Florencia en el Amazonas* (**July 10 & 12**).

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“At the heart of our eighty-eighth season are the stories of four great women who sacrifice everything for love,” says Evans Mirageas, Artistic Director. “Our marvelous collection of divas will move you to tears and thrill you with their artistry. Each production has been chosen with care to illuminate the stories—capped off by a brand new *La Traviata* from the team that gave us our spectacular *Aida* in 2007. This summer Music Hall will be vibrant with great operas, world-class singers and our amazing Cincinnati Symphony, Cincinnati Opera Chorus, and Cincinnati Ballet.”

The start time for evening performances has been moved 30 minutes earlier to **7:30 p.m.** The company has been considering this change for several years—taking the lead from other major performing arts companies in the region and throughout the U.S.

June 11, 13, & 15

***Madame Butterfly* (1904)**

Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

In Italian with English supertitles

Cincinnati Opera will open its 88th season with Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*, one of the most popular Italian operas. Based on the play *Madame Butterfly* by David Belasco, dramatizing a true incident, the gorgeous score and tragic story of love and betrayal have captured the hearts of audiences around the world. *Madame Butterfly* remains one of the most frequently performed operas; it was last presented by Cincinnati Opera in 2001.

THE CAST

Cio-Cio-San..... Shu-Ying Li*
Pinkerton Frank Lopardo
Sharpless..... John Hancock*
Suzuki..... Mika Shigematsu*
Goro..... Steven Cole
Prince Yamadori..... Kelvin Chan*
The Bonze Alain Coulombe*
The Imperial Commissioner..... Miroslaw Witkowski
Kate Pinkerton..... Audrey Walstrom*

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Edoardo Müller
Stage Director..... Mark Lamos*
Scenic Designer..... Michael Yeargan
Costume Designer Constance Hoffman
Lighting Designer..... Thomas C. Hase
Chorus Master Henri Venanzi
Production New York City Opera

Chinese-American soprano **Shu-Ying Li** brings her “convincing and vocally impressive” (*The New York Times*) portrayal of Cio-Cio-San to her Cincinnati Opera debut, a role she recently sang to acclaim with New York City Opera. Ms. Li is quickly becoming one of the most sought after interpreters of Puccini’s Cio-Cio-San in North America. **Frank Lopardo** returns with his “effortless, virile, Italianate sound and seamless acting ability” (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) to sing the role of Pinkerton, following a stellar performance as the womanizing Duke in *Rigoletto* (2005).

Baritone **John Hancock**, “an intelligent singer who’s made a commanding impression” (*The New Yorker*), debuts in Cincinnati in the role of Sharpless. Also debuting is Japanese mezzo-soprano **Mika Shigematsu**, who brings her “bright and confidently focused tone” (*Opera News*) to the role of Suzuki. Returning to Cincinnati after clever performances as the four servants in *The Tales of Hoffmann* (2006) is American character tenor **Steven Cole** singing the role of Goro.

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Canadian bass **Alain Coulombe** debuts with a “rich, commanding basso” (*Toronto Star*) in the role of The Bonze. Baritone **Kelvin Chan** debuts in the role of Yamadori. Polish bass **Mirosław Witkowski** returns to sing the role of Imperial Commissioner, and mezzo-soprano **Audrey Walstrom** makes her Cincinnati Opera debut in the role of Kate Pinkerton.

Directing is acclaimed American stage director **Mark Lamos**, who created the effervescent *L'Étoile* production that dazzled Cincinnati Opera audiences in 2006. Cincinnati favorite **Edoardo Müller**, who “led with a sure hand and straddled the worlds of light and dark impressively” (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) during *A Masked Ball* (2006), will conduct.

Lighting is designed by award-winning Broadway lighting designer, **Thomas C. Hase**. The acclaimed new production was designed by **Michael Yeargan** and **Mark Lamos** with costumes by **Constance Hoffman**. **Henri Venanzi** is chorus master.

Cincinnati Opera’s 2008 presentation of *Madame Butterfly* is underwritten by **L & L Nippert Charitable Foundation**. Evening performances of *Madame Butterfly* are sponsored by **Duke Energy** and **Ann Gatch**.

June 26 & 28

***Lucie de Lammermoor* (1839)**

French Revision of *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835)

Gaetano Donizetti

Libretto by Salvatore Commarano

In French with English supertitles

Cincinnati Opera presents Donizetti’s *Lucie de Lammermoor*. The French adaptation of the 1835 classic *Lucia di Lammermoor* was created in 1839 for the Théâtre de la Renaissance in Paris. In Donizetti’s best-known tragic opera, Lucie’s hopes to marry her secret love, Edgard, are dashed when her greedy brother, Henri, forces her into a financially strategic marriage for *his* convenience with Arthur. Even her chaplain and tutor Raymond encourages her to renounce her vow to Edgard. This French version of the classic Italian opera expands the role of the huntsman, Normanno, into Gilbert, a scheming character who forces Lucie’s brother Henri to play a more villainous role, and the earlier history of the romance between Lucie and Edgard is clarified.

THE CAST

Lucie..... Sarah Coburn
Edgard Mark T. Panuccio
Henri..... Gaétan Laperrière*
RaymondAlain Coulombe
Arthur John McVeigh*
Gilbert..... Jeremy Cady

THE CREATIVE TEAM

ConductorJean-Marie Zeitouni
Stage Director.....Mark Streshinsky
Scenic Designer.....John Conklin
Costume Designer Catherine Zuber
Lighting Designer.....Thomas C. Hase
ChoreographerDevon Carney
Chorus MasterHenri Venanzi
ProductionGlimmerglass Opera/Boston Opera

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Singing the roles of the lovers are two rapidly rising stars: American soprano **Sarah Coburn** as Lucie and American tenor **Mark T. Panuccio** as Edgard. Ms. Coburn won the hearts of Cincinnatians in her stellar performances of Oscar in *A Masked Ball* (2006) and Olympia in *The Tales of Hoffmann* (2006). Of her performances the *Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote: "Sarah Coburn is a rising star of the kind one feels lucky to witness." Mr. Panuccio brings his "always sweet-toned, supple and graceful, adroitly acted and clear-toned voice" (*Opera News*) to his starring role debut with Cincinnati Opera. A frequent performer with Cincinnati Opera, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* called Mr. Panuccio's 2007 Cincinnati recital debut "a landmark in the voice world."

French-Canadian baritone **Gaétan Laperrière** brings his "richly warm, sonorous baritone voice" (*Opera News*) to his Cincinnati Opera debut in the role of Henri. Canadian bass **Alain Coulombe** sings the role of Raymond, and American tenor **John McVeigh** debuts with "his bright tenor and animated presence" (*Opera News*) in the role of Arthur. Tenor **Jeremy Cady** returns to sing the role of Gilbert.

Maestro **Jean-Marie Zeitouni** returns to conduct after leading Cincinnati's dazzling production of *L'Étoile* (2006). Director **Mark Streshinsky** returns after directing Cincinnati Opera's highly acclaimed *The Tales of Hoffmann* (2006).

The brilliant new production was designed by **John Conklin** with costumes by **Catherine Zuber**. Lighting is designed by **Thomas C. Hase**. **Devon Carney** is choreographer and **Henri Venanzi** is chorus master.

Cincinnati Opera's 2008 presentation of *Lucie de Lammermoor* is underwritten by **The Cincinnati Opera Guild**. The opening night performance of *Lucie de Lammermoor* is sponsored by **Dr. & Mrs. Robert J. Hasl**.

July 10 & 12

Florencia en el Amazonas (1996)

(Florencia in the Amazon)

Daniel Catán

Libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain

In Spanish with English supertitles

A Cincinnati Opera Premiere

After receiving much acclaim in Houston, Seattle, and Los Angeles, Mexican composer Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* with its lush, romantic music and stunning sets will make its first voyage east to Cincinnati's stage. Inspired by the "magic realism" work of Gabriel García Márquez, the opera tells the story of Florencia Grimaldi, a famous European diva, who takes a steamboat journey down the Amazon River, returning home to give a concert and search for the man whose love gave her a voice. During her journey, Florencia encounters a number of interesting characters on the boat: a young couple in love, an older couple attempting to reignite love, the young reporter Rosalba, and the mythological Riolobo. Although the voyage is ultimately thwarted due to a cholera epidemic, the events of the journey provide valuable self-discovery for the passengers.

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THE CAST

Florencia.....Alexandra Coku*
Riolobo.....Nmon Ford*
Paula.....Emily Golden*
Rosalba.....Shana Blake Hill*
Arcadio.....Arturo Chacón-Cruz*
Alvaro.....Carlos Archuleta*
Capitan.....Burak Bilgili

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor.....Steven Mercurio*
Stage Director.....Andy Morton*
Scenic Designer.....Robert Israel
Costume Designer.....Catherine Zuber
Lighting Director.....Thomas C. Hase
Choreographer.....Danny Pelzig*
Chorus Master.....Henri Venanzi
Production.....Houston Grand Opera/
Francesca Zambello

Cincinnati Opera's first-ever mainstage opera in Spanish, will include the original Francesca Zambello production which premiered at Houston Grand Opera and presents nearly an entire cast of Cincinnati debuts. American soprano **Alexandra Coku** will make her Cincinnati Opera debut singing the role of Florencia. Of Ms. Coku's recent Houston Grand Opera performance *Opera News* writes: "a masterpiece of expressivity."

Making his Cincinnati debut in the role of Riolobo, the spirit of the river, is a two-time 2006 Grammy Award winning Panamanian-American baritone **Nmon Ford**, who brings his "resonating baritone, and his gripping presence" (*Opera News*) to the role.

Also debuting, mezzo-soprano **Emily Golden** brings her "handsome mezzo-soprano voice, lustrously dark in the mezzo range" (*The New York Times*) to sing the role of Paula, one of the passengers.

Soprano **Shana Blake Hill**, referred to in the *Los Angeles Times* as "an intense young soprano...a standout," debuts in Cincinnati in the role of Rosalba. Mexican tenor **Arturo Chacón-Cruz**, "a star worth watching" (*The Washington Post*) sings the role of Arcadio. Native New Mexican baritone **Carlos Archuleta** sings the role of Alvaro. Of Mr. Archuleta's recent portrayal in *Nixon in China*, *Opera News* deemed him an outstanding Nixon and writes "he sang the role beautifully." Young Turkish bass **Burak Bilgili** returns to sing Capitan after singing Ramfis in *Aida* (2007).

The talented American conductor, **Steven Mercurio**, will be on the podium. Maestro Mercurio has written arrangements for a wide array of artists including Andrea Bocelli, Placido Domingo, Ben Heppner, Bryn Terfel, Marcello Giordani, and Secret Garden. **Andy Morton** is stage director.

The "truly stunning" (*Houston Press*) production was designed by **Robert Israel** with costumes by **Catherine Zuber**. Lighting direction will be provided by **Thomas C. Hase**. **Danny Pelzig** is choreographer, and **Henri Venanzi** is chorus master.

Cincinnati Opera's 2008 presentation of *Florencia en el Amazonas* is underwritten by **Cathy and Tom Crain**. Evening performances of *Florencia en el Amazonas* are sponsored by **Dr. Edward B. Silberstein & Jacqueline M. Mack** and **Ann & Harry Santen**, in support of contemporary opera in Cincinnati.

July 23, 25 & 27

La Traviata (1853)

Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

In Italian with English supertitles

New Production Premieres in Cincinnati!

From the creators of Cincinnati Opera's spectacular 2007 *Aida*, comes a sumptuous and romantic new production of Verdi's *La Traviata*. This opulent new production by director **Bliss Hebert** and designer **Allen Charles Klein** and will make its world premiere in Cincinnati.

La Traviata is based on Alexandre Dumas's play, *La Dame aux Camélias*. The opera tells the story of a Parisian courtesan, Violetta, who falls in love with Alfredo, a young man from a prominent family. They make a new life, sacrificing all to be together, until his family's disapproval of their union forces them apart. In the end, the couple reunites only to be separated again—this time by Violetta's untimely death from consumption. *La Traviata* was last performed in Cincinnati in 2003.

THE CAST

Violetta Hei-Kyung Hong
Alfredo Richard Leech
Giorgio Philippe Rouillon
Gastone Brendan Tuohy*
Baron Douphol Bill McGraw*
Marchese d'Obigny Jeremy Kelly
Dr. Grenville David Michael
Flora Bervoix Audrey Babcock*

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Edoardo Müller
Stage Director Bliss Hebert
Scenic and Costume Designer Allen Charles Klein
Lighting Designer Thomas C. Hase
Choreographer Rosa Mercedes
Chorus Master Henri Venanzi
Production Cincinnati and Florida Grand Operas

Internationally renowned leading soprano **Hei-Kyung Hong** returns to Cincinnati after portraying Juliette in *Romeo and Juliette* (1994) to sing the role of Violetta. "Among the company's most beautiful and appealing stage figures" (*Opera News*), Ms. Hong recently performed the role at the Met and was "greeted by a deserved standing ovation" (*Opera News*).

Acclaimed tenor **Richard Leech** brings his "first-class voice, looks, acting talent, and charisma" (*Opera News*) to sing the role of Alfredo. Mr. Leech most recently sang the title role in *Faust* where he "was warm, lyrical and expressive, yet always controlled" (*Cincinnati Post*).

French baritone **Philippe Rouillon** returns to sing the role of Giorgio. Mr. Rouillon thrilled audiences in his 2006 Cincinnati Opera debut when he "projected one of the most formidable voices ever heard on this stage" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) as the four villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

Tenor **Brendan Tuohy** debuts in the role of Gastone and Cincinnati baritone **Bill McGraw** debuts in the role of Baron Douphol. **Jeremy Kelly** returns to sing the role of Marchese d'Obigny. Bass **David Michael** sings the role of Doctor Grenville and mezzo-soprano **Audrey Babcock** makes her company debut as Flora Bervoix. **Edoardo Müller** will conduct.

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Bliss Hebert returns to Cincinnati Opera to direct; **Allen Charles Klein** is scenic and costume designer; **Thomas C. Hase** is lighting designer; **Rosa Mercedes** is choreographer; and **Henri Venanzi** is chorus master.

Cincinnati Opera's 2008 presentation of *La Traviata* is underwritten by **H.C.S Foundation** and **Harry & Linda Fath**. Evening performances of *La Traviata* are sponsored by **Chavez Properties, Manuel D. & Rhoda Mayerson Foundation, and Ohio National Financial Services**.

Subscriptions are on sale now; single tickets will go on sale **May 22**. Single tickets range from \$25-145 per ticket. To purchase tickets call the Cincinnati Opera Box Office at (513) 241-2742 or visit www.cincinnatiopera.org. All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. (matinees begins at 3:00 p.m.) in Music Hall, 1241 Elm Street, Cincinnati, OH, 45202. Opera Insights, informative pre-performance lectures given by Artistic Director Evans Mirageas and special guests, begin at 6:30 p.m. (2:00 p.m. for July 15 and July 27 matinee) and are free to all ticket holders.

*indicates company debut

2008 SUMMER FESTIVAL

Madame Butterfly.....June 11, 13, & 15m
Lucie de Lammermoor.....June 26 & 28
Florenca en el Amazonas.....July 10 & 12
La Traviata.....July 23, 25, & 27m

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Cincinnati Opera's 2008 Season Presenting Sponsor is National City.

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