



press information

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SOPRANO RENÉE FLEMING REPRISES
THREE FAVORITE LEADING ROLES
IN *GREAT PERFORMANCES AT THE MET GALA*

Shines As Violetta, Manon
And *Capriccio*'s Countess

There are galas and then there's *The Metropolitan Opera Opening Night Gala Starring Renée Fleming*, premiering this March on *Great Performances at the Met* on PBS HD. Recorded last September to mark the opening of the Met's 125th anniversary season, the once-in-a-lifetime occasion showcases the soprano in three of her favorite roles: Violetta in Act II of Verdi's *La Traviata*, Manon in Act III of Massenet's *Manon*, and the Countess in the final scene of Strauss' *Capriccio*.

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Adding special glamour: *Vogue*-worthy costumes for the star created for each of the scenes by designers John Galiano, Christian Lacroix and Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel.

"Much diva dazzle," raved *The New York Times*. "It was a challenging feat to bring off. She gave her all and sang beautifully." Added *The Oregonian*, "Fleming looked and sounded magnificent."

The telecast, presented by THIRTEEN in 5.1 digital surround sound, opens with Act II of *La Traviata*, and continues with Act III of *Manon* and the final scene of the one act *Capriccio*. Met Music Director James Levine conducts *Traviata*, which has two scenes in Act II: the first at Violetta's country house and the second at a grand Parisian mansion as elaborately staged by legendary director Franco Zeffirelli. Ramón Vargas sings the role of Alfredo Germont, and Thomas Hampson that of his father, Giorgio. Christian Lacroix designed two costumes for

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Fleming, one for each scene.

The *Manon* act is also in two parts: the first is the spectacular “Cours-la-Reine” scene featuring the heroine’s famous “Gavotte,” followed by the searingly dramatic scene in the church of St. Sulpice. Ramón Vargas is Manon’s lover, the Chevalier des Grieux; Dwayne Croft her cousin, Lescaut, and Robert Lloyd the Chevalier’s father, the Comte des Grieux. Marco Armiliato conducts. Fleming’s costume for scene one and an additional cloak for the second scene are by Karl Lagerfeld.

The musically transcendent finale of *Capriccio*, conducted by Patrick Summers, Music Director of the Houston Grand Opera, concludes the evening, with Fleming stunning in black as dressed by John Galliano.

The fourth of 11 *Great Performances at the Met* broadcasts this season, *The Metropolitan Opera Opening Night Gala Starring Renée Fleming* is sung in Italian, French and German, with English surtitles. It was recorded September 22, 2008, as part of *The Met: Live in HD* series. Gary Halvorson directs, with Susan Graham and Deborah Voigt as hosts and Jay Saks as audio producer.

Great Performances is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Arts Fund, Vivian Milstein, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers, and PBS. Corporate support for *Great Performances at the Met* is provided by Toll Brothers. Additional funding for this telecast was provided by The Charles E. Culpeper Foundation.

Visit **Great Performances Online** at pbs.org/gperf for additional information on this and other *Great Performances* programs.

For the Met, Mia Bongiovanni and Elena Park are Supervising Producers, and Louisa Briccetti and Victoria Warivonchik are Producers. Peter Gelb is Executive Producer. For *Great Performances*, Bill O’Donnell is Series Producer; David Horn is Executive Producer.

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About WNET.ORG

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as Great Performances, Worldfocus, Nature, American Masters, Charlie Rose, Wide Angle, Secrets of the Dead, Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, Visions, Consuelo Mack WealthTrack, Wild Chronicles, Miffy and Friends, and Cyberchase to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

About the Met

Under the leadership of General Manager Peter Gelb and Music Director James Levine, the Met has a series of bold initiatives underway that are designed to broaden its audience and revitalize the company's repertory. The Met has made a commitment to presenting modern masterpieces alongside the classic repertory, with highly theatrical productions featuring the greatest opera stars in the world. Six new productions debut at the Met in 2008-09, including the company premiere of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*.

Building on its 77-year-old international radio broadcast history – heard over the Toll Brothers-Metropolitan Opera International Radio Network – the Met now uses advanced media distribution platforms and state-of-the-art technology to attract new audiences and reach millions of opera fans around the world. *The Met: Live in HD*, the company's Emmy-winning series of live performance transmissions, shown in high definition (HD) in movie theaters around the world, expands from eight to eleven transmissions in 2008-09 and includes distribution in New York City public schools and a number of pilot programs in schools around the country. Global distribution of the series this season reaches over 850 participating venues in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. These performances subsequently air on PBS, and a selection of these HD performances are available on DVD. Metropolitan Opera Radio on SIRIUS channel 78 and XM channel 79 is a subscription-based audio service broadcasting both live and rare historical performances. The Met recently introduced *Met Player*, a new subscription service that makes its extensive video and audio catalog of full-length performances available to the public for the first time online, and in exceptional, state-of-the-art quality. In addition to providing audio recordings through the *Met on Rhapsody* on-demand service, the company also presents free live audio streaming of performances on its website once every week during the opera season with support from RealNetworks®.

The Met has recently launched several audience development initiatives, including Open House dress rehearsals, the Arnold and Marie Schwartz Gallery Met, reduced ticket prices—including an immensely popular new rush ticket program, and an annual Holiday Series presentation for families. For more information, please visit: www.metopera.org.

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