



press information

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*Sleep and wakefulness serve as dueling themes in a present-day production of Bellini's **La Sonnambula**, airing on **Great Performances at the Met** on PBS July 11*

Mary Zimmerman's unique adaptation stages the opera in a rehearsal room set in the Swiss Alps

"Something that has not been said about the moon?" replied Spanish writer Ramon Gomez de la Serna. "That it gives manicures to women sleepwalkers."

Natalie Dessay's moon-kissed fingernails are all aglow as she "walks the walk" of Vincenzo Bellini's quintessential character Amina, perhaps the most renowned woman sleepwalker in opera history, in Zimmerman's production of the 1831 classic *La Sonnambula*, Latin for "The Somnambulist." The production will air on THIRTEEN's *Great Performances at the Met* Saturday, July 11 at Noon on PBS HD (check local listings) and is rated TV-PG.

Great Performances at the Met is a presentation of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America's most prolific and respected public media providers.

The sixth of Bellini's professional operas, *La Sonnambula* is set in a tiny village on the Swiss Alps. Mary Zimmerman's present-day version, however, is set in a rehearsal space where the actors are staging a production of *La Sonnambula* set in the Swiss Alps. The story begins as the village is preparing for the wedding of Amina, played by Dessay, and Elvino, played by Juan Diego Flórez (Dessay and Florez just returned from their sensational run together in *La Fille du*

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Régiment at opera houses around the world). Themes of jealousy, mistaken identity, and innocence prevail, as Bellini's sleepwalking beauty is put to the ultimate test to prove her undying love for her betrothed to the hauntingly mysterious music of Bellini and libretto by Felice Romani.

Great Performances At the Met: *La Sonnambula* is the eighth of 11 productions airing this season on the series. The performance is sung in Italian with English surtitles.

Great Performances is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers, and PBS. Corporate support for **Great Performances at the Met** is provided by Toll Brothers.

Visit **Great Performances Online** at www.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.

The Met's recently announced 2009-10 season will feature eight new productions, four of which are Met premieres. Opening night will be a new production of *Tosca* starring Karita Mattila, conducted by Levine and directed by Luc Bondy. The four Met premieres are: Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and directed by Patrice Chéreau, both in Met debuts; Verdi's *Attila*, conducted by Riccardo Muti and directed by Pierre Audi, with set and costume design by Miuccia Prada, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, all in their Met debuts; Shostakovich's *The Nose*, conducted by Valery Gergiev and directed and designed by William Kentridge in his Met debut; and Rossini's *Armida* with Renée Fleming, conducted by Riccardo Frizza and directed by Mary Zimmerman. Other new productions are Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, conducted by Levine and directed by Bartlett Sher; *Carmen* with Angela Gheorghiu in the title role, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin and directed by Richard Eyre, both in Met debuts; and Thomas's *Hamlet* with Natalie Dessay and Simon Keenlyside, conducted by Louis Langrée and directed by Patrice Caurier and Moshe Leiser in their Met debuts.

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 Emmy and Peabody Award-winning *The Met: Live in HD* series expanded to feature 11 live transmissions in the 2008-09 season, selling more than 1.73 million tickets. The productions are seen this season in 868 theaters in 35 countries around the world. These performances began airing on PBS in March 2008. The series returns for its fourth season in 2009-10 with nine transmissions, beginning October 10 with a new production of Puccini's *Tosca* starring Karita Mattila and ending with a new production of Rossini's *Armida* starring Renée Fleming on May 1. Metropolitan Opera Radio on SIRIUS XM Radio is a subscription-based audio service broadcasting both live and rare historical performances.

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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