Sir Simon Rattle Conducts Tristan und Isolde
on Season Premiere of
Great Performances at the Met
Sunday, January 29 at 12 p.m. on PBS

Nina Stemme and Stuart Skelton Star in New Staging by Mariusz Treliński

The Met’s new production of Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle in his first Met performances since his 2010 debut, opens the new season of THIRTEEN’S Great Performances at the Met, Sunday, January 29 at 12 p.m. on PBS (check local listings). (In New York, THIRTEEN will air the opera at 12:30 p.m.)

Swedish soprano Nina Stemme leads the cast in her signature role, Isolde, which she has sung to acclaim with major international opera companies around the world. Her Tristan is Australian heldentenor Stuart Skelton, who sang Siegmund in the Met’s Ring cycle in 2013.
The cast also includes Ekaterina Gubanova as Brangäne and Evgeny Nikitin as Kurwenal, with René Pape reprising King Marke. The staging is by Mariusz Treliński, who directed the 2015 Met double bill of Iolanta and Bluebeard's Castle.

The opera premiered at the Munich Court Theater in 1865. Wagner's breathtaking meditation on love and death holds a unique place in the opera world. Its music has astounded, infuriated, and inspired audiences since it was first heard, and the title roles are acknowledged as among the most extraordinarily demanding in opera. The vocal challenges, the sumptuous symphonic scale of the orchestral writing, and the mystical nature of the story, with its opportunities for creative visual design, make this awe-inspiring work a phenomenon of the repertory.

Richard Wagner (1813–1883) was the controversial creator of music-drama masterpieces that stand at the center of today’s operatic repertory. An artistic revolutionary who reimagined every supposition about theater, Wagner insisted that words and music were equals in his works. This approach led to the idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk, or “total work of art,” combining music, poetry, architecture, painting, and other disciplines, a notion that has had an impact on creative fields far beyond opera.

The three acts of the opera are originally set, respectively, aboard ship on the Irish Sea, in Cornwall (southwestern Britain), and in Brittany (northwestern France). The many versions of this story all pay homage to the Celtic ambience and probable origin of the tale. Wagner’s preservation of this context emphasizes several key themes associated with ancient Celtic culture: mysticism, knowledge of the magic arts, an evolved warrior code, and a distinctly non-Christian vision of the possibilities of the afterlife.

Critics hailed the Met’s “audacious new production” (The New York Times). The Guardian declared that "Nina Stemme's voice is a force of nature." The Wall Street Journal found it to be "a powerful new production... Vocally thrilling." And The Washington Post wrote, "Stemme is arguably today's leading Heldensoprano: a Wagnerian for the 21st century... Skelton had moments of real vocal beauty, with a melting quality to the singing. ... Rattle was a luxurious presence in the pit."

Soprano Deborah Voigt hosts the broadcast.

Tristan und Isolde was originally seen live in movie theaters on October 8 as part of the groundbreaking The Met: Live in HD series, which transmits live performances to more than 2,000 movie theaters and performing arts centers in over 70 countries around the world. The Live in HD series has reached a record-breaking 21 million viewers since its inception in 2006.

Great Performances at the Met is a presentation of THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET, one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers.
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For the Met, Gary Halvorson directs the telecast. David Frost is Music Producer. Mia Bongiovanni and Elena Park are Supervising Producers, and Louisa Briccetti and Victoria Warinonchik are Producers. Peter Gelb is Executive Producer. For Great Performances, Bill O’Donnell is Series Producer; David Horn is Executive Producer.

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

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About WNET
WNET is America’s flagship PBS station and parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21. WNET also operates NJTV, the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its broadcast channels, three cable services (KidsThirteen, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, PBS NewsHour Weekend, Charlie Rose and a range of documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings. WNET’s groundbreaking series for children and young adults include Get the Math, Oh Noah! and Cyberchase as well as Mission US, the award-winning interactive history game. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique culture and diverse communities through NYC-ARTS, Reel 13, NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams and MetroFocus, the daily multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. In addition, WNET produces online-only programming including the award-winning series about gender identity, First Person, and an intergenerational look at tech and pop culture, The Chatterbox with Kevin and Grandma Lill. In 2015, THIRTEEN launched Passport, an online streaming service which allows members to see new and archival THIRTEEN and PBS programming anytime, anywhere: www.thirteen.org/passport.

About the Met
THE METROPOLITAN OPERA is America’s leading performing arts organization and a vibrant home for the world’s most creative and talented artists, including singers, conductors, composers, orchestra musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers. The Company presents more than 200 performances each season of a wide variety of operas, ranging from early masterpieces to contemporary works. In recent years, the Met has launched many initiatives designed to make opera more accessible, most prominently the Live in HD series of cinema transmissions, which dramatically expands the Met audience by allowing select performances to be seen in more than 2,000 theaters in 70 countries around the world.

Synopsis:

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