

## The new season of the Opera takes audiences to Puccini's Italy

**16 premieres, 60 repertoire pieces, the inauguration of the Eiffel Arts Studios as well as the reopening of the Opera House are all featured in the 2018/19 season of the Hungarian State Opera. Until these venues are opened the resident companies of the Opera carry on touring: apart from guest appearances in county towns and Hungarian settlements beyond the borders of Hungary, the Opera is to visit New York, Berlin, the capitals of the Visegrád Group, and several Italian places that played an important role in the life of Puccini.**

The thematical season of 2018/19 entitled "Puccini's Italy" focuses on the composers of the turn of the previous century while putting emphasis on the life and work of Puccini, the most popular opera composer of the 20th century. *La fanciulla del West* is to be staged by **Vasily Barkhatov**, a young director sought after on German and Russian stages. Audiences can also enjoy a new version of *Manon Lescaut* directed by **Máté Szabó**, the first staged version of *Edgar* at the Hungarian State Opera directed by **Ádám Tulassay**, and for the first time ever at the Opera, *La rondine* in a production by **Ferenc Anger**. Puccini's contemporaries are also included in the programme. Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* is also staged by Ferenc Anger while *La bohème* by Leoncavallo and *Il principe Zilah* by Alfano can be seen in concert versions. To crown the season, the thematical Puccini Festival will coincide with the reopening of the Opera House. Uniquely, all of Puccini's operas will be performed at the month-long festival alongside song recitals, church concerts, ballet performances, screenings, and verismo operas. The Choral Artist's Mini Festival will take place again during this period, and the closing event of the festival will be the Hungarian debut of the leading Italian tenor, **Vittorio Grigolo**.

On the birthday of Mozart, 27 January, 2019, the Bánffy Stage at the Eiffel Art Studios will be inaugurated with the world premiere of a Mozart piece. *L'oca del Cairo, ossia Lo sposo deluso* is a pasticcio directed by **Attila Toronykőy** based on an idea by Szilveszter Ókovács using two unfinished comic operas by Mozart. This new location will partly become a rehearsal stage apart from being a venue where mostly baroque, modern and contemporary performances can take place. For instance, two one-act pieces directed by **Csaba Káel** will be staged here: *The Gold and the Woman*, the only opera by Jenő Kenesey paired with *The Tót Family* by Péter Tóth, based on the popular story by István Örkény. The tradition of closing the season with a baroque opera also continues: **Kriszta Székely** will stage Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. The programme of the Bánffy Stage will also include a chamber play commissioned by the Opera: *Chrysanthemums, or Liù's Death* by **Balázs Szálinger** drawing on Puccini's life.

The Hungarian National Ballet expands its modern repertoire further with *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude* by William Forsythe, and *Bedroom Folk* by Sharon Eyal and Gai Behar as parts of the ballet evening *Triple Dance*. George Balanchine's *Sylvia Pas de Deux* (based on Léo Delibes's piece) will be featured in the *OMG* ballet night. All three choreographies will make their Hungarian debut. The grandest ballet premiere of the 2018/19 season is Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling* (with music by Franz Liszt). The choreography based on the tragic story of Archduke Rudolph and Maria von Vetsera returns to the repertoire after 13 years in a new production based on original designs.

Audiences can welcome many stars of the opera world at the Erkel Theatre. In two performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor* the title role will be sung by **Edita Gruberová**, who appeared in this production during the Japanese tour of the Opera last year. **Elīna Garanča** will return to Budapest with an aria recital, whereas the young Bulgarian soprano **Sonya Yoncheva** will make her Hungarian debut at our annual carnival gala. Some of the Opera's own stars will celebrate their jubilees as well: **Eszter Sűmegi**, who has recently been awarded the prestigious Kossuth Prize, will celebrate 25 years on stage, whereas **Mihály Kámándy's** 30-year jubilee will be celebrated with a special performance of *Rigoletto*.

The new season will see the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra accompany several international stars. They will appear in Veszprém, at the gala concert of **José Cura**, **Erika Miklósa**, **Andrea Rost** and **Ramón Vargas**. At the Margaret Island Open-Air Theatre, they will accompany **Erwin Schrott**. The Orchestra is to continue the collaboration that started last year at Waldbühne Berlin with **Anna Netrebko** and **Yusif Eyvazov**, this time in Zurich and Cologne. Further concerts are announced with **Juan Diego Flórez** at the Royal Opera House in Muscat in Oman, and **Joseph Calleja** at Müpa.

Due to the constructions made on the Opera House and the Eiffel Art Studios the artists of the Opera continue touring in Hungary and abroad in the 2018/19 season. Between 25. and 28. July, the Hungarian State Opera appears at the renowned Saaremaa Opera Festival with *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La traviata*, *Der Zigeunerbaron* and a gala concert. The Italy Roadshow takes place between 14 and 21 September: the artists will pay homage to Puccini with aria recitals in towns significant in the composer's life and works. The Hungarian State Opera and the Hungarian National Ballet is to make their U. S. debut between 30 October and 11 November at the David H. Koch Theater presenting six opera and ballet productions including the American premieres of Erkel's *Bánk Bán* and János Vajda's *Mario and the Magician* as well as the choreographies of *Swan Lake* and *Don Quixote* by Rudi van Danzig and Michael Messerer, respectively. The Opera Orchestra will also give a gala concert at the Carnegie Hall. The opera *Bánk Bán* will also be taken to Tegu, South Korea between 7 and 20 January, 2019 as part of a special initiative: in cooperation with the local theatres, a

special concert version will be created. Two Richard Strauss productions, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* will be presented at the Deutsche Oper Berlin on 6 and 7 July, 2019. In August 2019, *Salome* will take place at the venue where the story originally took place, the ruins of the citadel of Machareus.

A new nationwide programme entitled “Opera from the Opera” begins in September. To fit into the theme of the season, between September 2018 and April 2019, opera and ballet galas, a symphonic concert plus the concert versions of *La bohème*, *Tosca* and *Turandot* can be seen at concert halls and theatres in those towns of Hungary plus Hungarian towns abroad which normally do not have opera and ballet performances. The tradition of the Touring Opera also continues in eight county towns between 31 August and 9 September: Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore* (sung in Hungarian) is presented in a new production by Attila Toronykőy. This production is set to return in August 2019 to Transylvania as well as to the Hungarian diaspora in Partium and the Banat region. Earlier this year, the Carpathian Homeland Opera Tour missed the town of Berehove (Ukraine), so on 1 September a concert version of *Bánk Bán* is scheduled there. Finally, under the title of Carpathian Homeland Plus, the opera *Hunyadi László* and the ballet version of *The Merry Widow* closes the grand tour, this time in real theatrical circumstances, at the Croatian National Theatre Zagreb on 10 and 11 September.

Because of the constructions and the tours, the Budapest season of the Opera might seem a bit meagre. The first première of the 2018/19 season in September, Orff’s *Carmina Burana* (following a concept of conductor **Tibor Bogányi**) is set to be a spectacular staged version with screenings and dance sequences at the Erkel Theatre. After September, the theatre only opens in December and awaits audiences with 40 different types of subscriptions. The renewal of subscriptions take place between 26 and 29 March, 2018 at the Erkel Theatre and online. New subscriptions can be purchased at the Opera Sales Centre and online between 3 April and 29 June.