

## **Italian opera, bel canto and the future of conducting in safe hands with Carlo Rizzi**

***Rigoletto* - Dutch National Opera (9 May – 5 June 2017)  
Opera Rara concert - Cadogan Hall (14 July 2017)  
*Norma* – The Metropolitan Opera (25 September – 20 October 2017)  
*Turandot* - The Metropolitan Opera (12 October – 16 November 2017)  
*La forza del destino* - Welsh National Opera (2 February – 21 April 2018)  
*Tosca* - Welsh National Opera (9 February – 20 April 2018)  
*Madama Butterfly* - Deutsche Oper Berlin (25 February – 10 March 2018)**

*“Reviews of Bellini operas don’t usually start with the conductor. However, at the first night of Welsh National Opera’s new production of Bellini’s *I puritani*, Carlo Rizzi’s conducting touched a level of intensity and understanding that might not unreasonably be described as great. Here was a real conductor, bringing a huge sense of passion to Bellini. Rizzi allowed the performance to breathe and inhabit its own space: rarely can Bellini’s final masterpiece have been as lovingly conducted, allowing every singer to give full expressive weight to their performances.” Opera Now, October 2015*

Ranking among today’s leading conductors, Carlo Rizzi’s vast repertoire ranges from the foundation works of the operatic and symphonic canon to rarities by Bellini, Cimarosa and Donizetti. He is in high demand as a guest artist at the world’s most prestigious venues and festivals, not least for the insight and integrity of his musicianship and the visceral energy and psychological depths of his interpretations.

Although equally at home in the concert hall as on the operatic stage, the following year sees Rizzi take up the baton to conduct operas by his Italian compatriots - Verdi, Puccini, Bellini and Donizetti - on a number of occasions: *Rigoletto* with Dutch National Opera, *Norma* and *Turandot* at the Metropolitan Opera, *La forza del destino* and *Tosca* at Welsh National Opera, *Madama Butterfly* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, plus a recording and concert of rare bel canto masterpieces. His expertise in the form is due in no small way to his attention to the text as well as the music. In Rizzi’s words: “I love the incredible richness and diversity of Italian operas and I always aim to bring out the drama that inspired the various composers to produce such musical and theatrical masterpieces. The connection between music and word is, for me, key in exploring and performing Italian opera.”

Juxtaposed with this immersion in the world of Italian opera, Rizzi finds time to further develop his educational work. Between May and July 2017 he collaborates with the European Network of Opera Academies (enoa), hosting a series of three workshops for young conductors in Belgium, The Netherlands and Portugal.

The first of Rizzi’s operatic engagements is a new production of *Rigoletto* for Dutch National Opera. Always a popular guest with DNO, Rizzi will conduct the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra in ten performances between May and June 2017, directed by fellow Italian Damiano Michieletto. Having made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1993 with Puccini’s *La bohème*, Rizzi returns once more to New York to open the 2017/18 Season with a new production of Bellini’s bel canto masterpiece *Norma*, directed by Sir David McVicar. Soprano Sondra Radvanovsky shares the title role with Marina Rebeka, whilst tenor Joseph Calleja sings Pollione and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato takes on the role of Adalgisa. The production will be relayed live into cinemas throughout the world on Saturday 7 October 2017 as part of The Met: Live in HD series of broadcast.

Following two hugely successful terms as Music Director of Welsh National Opera (1992-2001, 2004-08) and as Conductor Laureate since 2015, Carlo Rizzi continues his close relationship with the company in the spring of 2018. He will conduct a three-year Verdi trilogy, co-produced with Oper der Stadt Bonn. The first opera will be a new production of *La forza del destino* which will open at Wales Millennium Centre on 2 February 2018 and marks Rizzi’s conducting debut of this Verdi masterpiece.

*Forza* will be followed by new productions of *Un ballo in maschera* in early 2019 and *Les vêpres siciliennes* in the spring of 2020. All three operas will be directed by WNO’s Artistic Director David Pountney and comprise the same creative team of Raimund Bauer (designer), Marie-Jeanne Lecca (costume designer) and Fabrice Kebour (lighting designer). Says Rizzi: “I was drawn to this Verdi season because these three operas are all

pivotal, in different and interesting ways, in the development of the musical style of the Maestro of Busseto and we can explore that. Spending time on them with the excellent forces of WNO, David Pountney and Gwyn Hughes Jones will be very rewarding – both for me and then, I hope, for WNO's audiences. In the case of *Ballo* and *Vêpres*, I will be revisiting works I have already conducted many times, but *Forza* – rather incredibly – is a personal debut, so bringing that great score to the stage is a particularly exciting part of the project for me.”

Also with WNO, Rizzi will conduct a revival of Michael Blackmore's production of *Tosca*, a Puccini favourite and an opera that Rizzi has conducted on several occasions, notably at La Scala, Milan in 2015. The opening night will take place at Wales Millennium Centre on 9 February 2018, with sopranos Claire Rutter and Mary Elizabeth Williams sharing the role of Floria Tosca throughout the British tour that ends in Llandudno on 20 April.

Having made his debut with Deutsche Oper Berlin in 2015 conducting *La fanciulla del West*, Rizzi returns to the Company in 2018 for three performances of another Puccini opera, *Madama Butterfly* (25 February – 10 March) with the Uruguayan soprano María José Siri in the title role.

In addition, this summer Opera Rara will release two discs of bel canto arias conducted by Rizzi. Having recorded the CDs in February 2017 with the Hallé, the two soloists, tenor Michael Spyres and soprano Joyce El-Khoury will share the platform at London's Cadogan Hall on Friday 14 July, with Rizzi once again conducting the Hallé in an evening of 19th century operatic treasures. Rare works, mainly by Donizetti and Rossini have played a big role in Rizzi's repertoire especially in his early years - he made his conducting debut with Donizetti's *L'ajo nell'imbarazzo* in 1982. “I always find it interesting to get closer to works which are not particularly well known or performed that often”, Rizzi says.

Whilst opera is undoubtedly a significant part of Rizzi's career, education is an increasingly important aspect of Rizzi's future and 2017 will see him host opera conducting workshops for conductors in three sessions held in three different institutions belonging to the European Network of Opera Academies (enoa). Rizzi will lead three separate workshops teaching participants different aspects of conducting in the world of opera: how to work with soloists, chorus and orchestra respectively. The first of these workshops 'Working on the operatic repertoire with soloists' will take place at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel, Waterloo, Belgium (10 - 14 May), the second 'Working with a professional opera chorus' will be held at the Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam (30 May - 4 June) and the third and last 'Working with a professional orchestra' at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon (5 - 8 July). The same group of conductors will take part in all three phases of the workshop. Rizzi will hold a public masterclass in Waterloo and at the end of the cycle one participant will receive a position for a residency at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in 2018.

As International Chair in Conducting at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Rizzi's educational work will also involve the College's new Opera School, in direct partnership with WNO. Blending opera and education comes naturally to Rizzi. “I have always been interested in education and strongly championed the emergence of education and community programmes when I was a Music Director at WNO - work in schools, new commissions, the creation of Welsh National Youth Opera and community projects” he says. “Now that I have accumulated many years of experience, I see there is something special I can offer to new generations of singers and musicians; in return, I gain a great deal from their enthusiasm, energy and ideas about opera or the presentation of a concert. I think it is important that those of us who are working now stay focused on the future of live music making, and this is best done, with great joy, with the young artists I encounter.”

Indeed it is Rizzi's own experience, enthusiasm and accomplishment which have led him to the position he is in today – a Maestro with a mission and the perfect person to pass on the baton to the next generation of conductors.

[www.carlorizzi.com](http://www.carlorizzi.com)

**For press enquiries, please contact:**

Valerie Barber PR  
Suite 2  
9a St John's Wood High Street  
London NW8 7NG  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7586 8560  
[elena@vbpr.co.uk](mailto:elena@vbpr.co.uk)  
[www.vbpr.co.uk](http://www.vbpr.co.uk)

## Notes for Editors

### European Network of Opera Academies (enoa)

enoa is a network of European cultural institutions – academies, opera producers, foundations and festivals – which counts 13 full members and 13 associated partners from 17 European countries. From May 2011 until April 2016, with the support of the Culture Programme of the European Union, enoa worked to train emerging artists and promote their mobility, while encouraging the creation and performance of new operas all over Europe. In May 2016, with support from the Creative Europe programme, enoa launched Young Opera Makers, which offers an ambitious four-year-programme consisting of a wide variety of activities hosted by enoa members all over Europe including workshops, labs, residencies, co-productions and co-commissions. With this new programme, the network aims to give young artists the keys to their international career development.

### Opera Rara

Founded by Patric Schmid and Don White, Opera Rara has been bringing back forgotten operatic repertoire since its conception in the early 1970s, with the operas of the Italian bel canto repertory being a particular focus.

## PERFORMANCE DATES

**9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 28, 31 May, 2, 5 June 2017**

**Dutch National Opera**

**Verdi *Rigoletto* - NEW PRODUCTION**

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **Luca Salsi** Rigoletto | **Saimir Pirgu** The Duke of Mantua | **Lisette Oropesa** Gilda | **Damiano Michieletto** director | **Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Friday 14 July 2017, 7pm**

**Cadogan Hall**

Opera Rara concert – Arias by Rossini, Meyerbeer, Halévy, Auber, Verdi and Donizetti

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **Joyce El Khoury** soprano | **Michael Spyres** tenor | **Hallé**

**25, 28 September, 3, 7, 11, 16, 20 October 2017**

**The Metropolitan Opera, New York**

**Bellini *Norma* - NEW PRODUCTION**

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **Sondra Radvanovsky / Marina Rebeka** Norma | **Joyce DiDonato** Adalgisa | **Joseph Calleja** Pollione | **Matthew Rose / Vazgen Gazaryan** Oroveso | **Sir David McVicar** director | **The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra**

**12, 17, 21, 25, 28, 31 October, 4, 8, 11, 16 November 2017**

**The Metropolitan Opera, New York**

**Puccini *Turandot***

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **Oksana Dika** Turandot | **Maria Agresta / Hei-Kyung Hong** Liù | **Marcelo Álvarez** Calaf | **James Morris / Giorgi Kirof** Timur | **Franco Zeffirelli** director | **The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra**

**2, 10, 17 February, 6, 21, 27 March, 7, 14, 21 April 2018**

**Welsh National Opera**

**Verdi *La forza del destino* - NEW PRODUCTION**

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **Mary Elizabeth Williams** Leonora | **Gwyn Hughes Jones** Alvaro | **Luis Cansino** Don Carlo Di Vargas | **David Pountney** director | **WNO Orchestra**

**9, 11, 16, 21, 23 February, 8, 22, 24, 29, 31 March, 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20 April 2018**

**Welsh National Opera**

**Puccini *Tosca***

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **Claire Rutter / Mary Elizabeth Williams** Tosca | **Hector Sandoval / Gwyn Hughes Jones** Cavaradossi | **Mark Doss** Scarpia | **David Pountney** director | **WNO Orchestra**

**25 February, 2, 10 March 2018**

**Deutsche Oper Berlin**

**Puccini *Madama Butterfly***

**Carlo Rizzi** conductor | **María José Siri** Cio-Cio-San | **Piero Pretti** Pinkerton | **Jana Kurucová** Suzuki | **Pier Luigi Samaritani** director | **Orchester der Deutschen Oper Berlin**