Three enormous, 27-metre-high fire-spewing “dragon dogs”, a Queen of the Night costume to break all records, three mythical creatures for the three ladies operated by puppets, and dozens of stunt artists rushing around the stage: in his staging for the Bregenz Festival, David Pountney offers “a spectacle of the highest caliber” (NeueZürcherZeitung), while providing new answers to the eternal questions surrounding The Magic Flute. The Kurier newspaper called it “a visually mind-blowing fairy tale”, with Die Welt adding “a colorful as well as smart Magic Flute".

The vocal ensemble leaves nothing to be desired either: Ana Durlovski (voted Singer of the Year by Opernwelt magazine) is captivating as the Queen of the Night with her “flawless coloraturas” (Der Standard), while Norman Reinhardt sings an “outstanding Tamino” (Deutschlandradio) and EikeWilm Schulte is a deluxe casting as Second Knight. Patrick Summers conducts Mozart’s score with the impeccable Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

In the aftermath of Rigoletto, Verdi’s sole desire was to do something new. However, he became impatient, angry even, when the project to adapt El Tovarador, the play by the Spanish dramatist Antonio García Gutiérrez, aroused only guarded enthusiasm from Salvador Cammarano, his librettist, and the man to whom Donizetti owed in part the success of Lucia di Lammermoor.

Was it due to the libretto’s inordinately improbable storyline or the illness that would ultimately consume him that the poet left the libretto unfinished? Despite the urgings of the irrepressible Verdi, Cammarano would not yield. Heroin lays the paradox of Il Trovatore: in the eyes of its detractors it was the epitome of melodrama and yet the formal constraints imposed by Cammarano fanned the flames of the composer’s passions. Rather than true characters – excepting perhaps Azucena the Gypsy, who guards the secret that will destroy them all – the music portrays almost abstract figures consumed by passion. Originally intended by Verdi to be a secondary role, Leonora takes on the status of a sacrificial heroine. Her fourth-act cavatina “D’amor sull’ali rose” is not so much a farewell as an Assumption.

No man shall ever possess her – the Chinese princess Turandot sets three riddles for every man that comes to woo her. So far none have been able to solve the riddles, and have paid with their heads. Then an unknown prince achieves the impossible: he correctly answers all three questions. But Turandot is still unwilling to surrender to him. So the Prince is ready to lay down his life if she can find out his name by morning. Throughout the night, no one may sleep: everyone must try to discover his name...

It is this aria sung by Calaf, “Nessun dorma”, that made Giacomo Puccini’s opera Turandot world famous. On the Bregenz stage it’s delivered against the imposing backdrop of a dragon-shaped wall on Lake Constance. Marco Arturo Marescotti’s stage set makes use of Chinese symbols of power. The stage wall is inspired by the world’s longest man-made structure, the Great Wall of China. The Bregenz wall is criss-crossed by detachments of terracotta warriors, over two hundred in all, some of them sky-high, others half-submerged in the water.

There are Chinese elements in the music, too. Puccini was inspired by tunes from music boxes that a diplomat friend brought back from China. But however Chinese Puccini’s last opera might appear, it is adapted from a Persian tale and the score is full-blown Italian opera. The powerful Turandot is contrasted with the self-sacrificing Liu, who loves Prince Calaf and knows his name but movingly takes the secret to her grave. The populace mourns her death as passionately as previously the populace mourned her son’s death.

Fire artists, dancers and soldiers accompany Turandot’s entrance in Act Two. Before she sets the Prince her riddles, she reveals why she is so hard-hearted: long ago a female ancestor of hers was abused and murdered by a man.

Finally, however, Calaf’s love is able to break the mask of Turandot’s ancestress. As Puccini wanted, the two of them ‘descend through love to the level of mankind, and this love must at the end take possession of the whole stage’.
September 24 - Noon
TOSCA
Giacomo Puccini
Opera in 3 acts
Sung in Italian
Opéra Royal de Wallonie - Liège
Recorded in January 2015
Puccini’s fifth opera, Tosca marks an important transition in Puccini’s work. His previous opera, La Bohème, considered by many to be his first masterpiece, is at the same time, the last of Puccini’s work portray the struggles and dreams of society’s lower classes.

With Tosca, Puccini returns to the purest tragedy, focusing on the violent and tragic downfall of three historic figures. Tosca is a highly focused opera, concentrated around the complex and fully developed psychologies of its three main characters. Inspired by the riveting performance of Sarah Bernhardt in the play by Victorien Sardou, Puccini artfully crafted the jealousy, turmoil and despair of the entrancing Flora Tosca. After a period of torment andstormy writing with his librettists, Puccini finalized his composition just days before the opera’s premiere on January 14, 1900 at Teatro Costanzi in Rome.

Pablo Arriabeni, musical director of the Royal Opera of Wallonie-Liège conducts this new production directed by Claire Servais.

Pavarotti & Friends: Duets
September 10 - Noon
CARMEN
Georges Bizet
Opera in 4 acts
From Euro Mediterranean Festival
The opera was first performed at the Opera Comique of Paris, on 3 March 1875, and at first was not particularly successful. Its 36 performances, before the conclusion of which Bizet died suddenly, and thus knew nothing of the opera’s later celebrity.

The music of Carmen has been widely acclaimed ever since for its brilliance of melody, harmony, orchestration and orchestral, and for the skill with which Bizet musically represented the emotions and suffering of his characters. After the composer’s death the score was subject to significant amendment, including the introduction of an orchestral recitative around the original dialogue. And there is no standard edition of the opera, and different voices exist as to what versions best express Bizet’s intentions. The opera has been recorded many times since the first acoustical recording in 1906, and the story has been the subject of many screen and stage adaptations.

This one comes now from the ancient Greek Theater of Taormina as a new production staged by Enrico Castiglione considered, on today’s international scenario, as one of the best-known and respected musical theatre directors and set designer of his generation.

The Three Tenors 1990
Recorded at their first magical concert at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome in 1990

Magic was created in July 1990, when Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo and José Carreras met onstage at the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and became the Three Tenors. This greatest musical event ever is an awe-inspiring orgy of the greatest hits for the tenor voice. Zubin Mehta exquisitely captures the largeness of this bonanza through the grandiose orchestra.

Concert Program
1. José Carreras – Il Lamento Di Federico - Andrea Bocelli
2. Plácido Domingo - Beau Paradis - Giacomo Meyerbeer (L’Africaine)
3. Luciano Pavarotti – Recondita Armonia - Giacomo Puccini (Tosca)
4. Plácido Domingo – Dein Ist Mein Ganzes Herz - Franz Lehár (Das Land des Lächelns)
5. Luciano Pavarotti – Rondine Al Nido - Vincenzo de Crescenzo
6. José Carreras – Core'ntigrado - Alessandro Sisca
7. I Vespri Siciliani Sinfonia
8. Luciano Pavarotti – Torna A Surriento - Ernesto De Curtis
9. José Carreras – Granada - Agustín Lara
10. Plácido Domingo – No Puede Ser - Pablo Sorozabal
11. José Carreras – Improviso - Umberto Giordano (Andrea Chénier)
12. Plácido Domingo – E Lucevan Le Stelle - Giacomo Puccini (Tosca)
13. Luciano Pavarotti - Nessun Dorma - Giacomo Puccini (Turandot)

FINALE MEDLEY:
José Carreras, Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti
14. Maria - Tonight - O paese d’i sole – Cielito lindo
Memory - O chili tchorniye - Caminito - La Vie en Rose
Minnihat - Wien, Wien, nur du allein - Amapola - O sole mio

Encore:
15. José Carreras, Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti - O sole mio
16. José Carreras, Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti - Nessun dorma

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