

STAGEBILL

APRIL 2000



NEW YORK
CITY
OPERA

STAGEBILL

75 YEARS

PROGRAM PUBLISHERS SINCE 1924

C O N T E N T S A P R I L 2 0 0 0

FEATURES

Titus Transfigured 10

As Stephen Wadsworth's new production of Mozart's last opera, *La clemenza di Tito*, comes to New York City Opera, *Christopher Jones* takes a look at the real Titus. Was clemency really one of his virtues?

Opéra Bouffe 14

Rameau's *Platée*, a Baroque comic masterpiece, graces the stage of the New York State Theater this month. *Robert Sandla* interviews director and choreographer Mark Morris, set designer Adrianne Lobel, and costume designer Isaac Mizrahi.

THE PROGRAM 17

DEPARTMENTS

New York City Opera Calendar 34

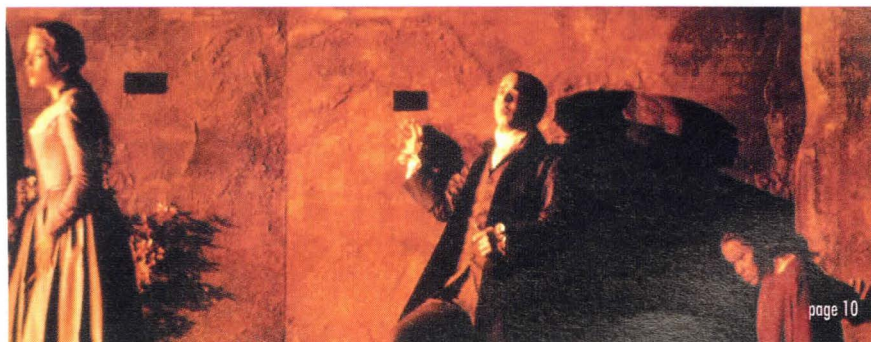
Next Season at New York City Opera 62



page 14

BILL CORNER

1999-2000
**CITY
OPERA**



page 10

JIM CALDWELL

ON THE COVER: *LA CLEMENZA DI TITO*; PHOTO: ELISABETH THORBURN/THE GLASGOW PICTURE LIBRARY

OPÉRA BOUFFE

New York City Opera is riding the crest of a wave of hit productions of Baroque operas. And this month, City Opera presents the company premiere of Rameau's *Platée*, in a vibrant production directed and choreographed by Mark Morris.

ROBERT SANDLA catches up with Morris and two of his creative collaborators, costume designer Isaac Mizrahi and scenic designer Adrienne Lobel.

It's probably a safe bet to say that Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Platée* is one of very few Baroque operas to feature an amphibious heroine. Poor *Platée*. With her webbed feet, ungainly waddle, stentorian squawk, and vainglorious delusion that Jupiter himself finds her fetching, she's a classic example of the conceited female who gets a cruel comeuppance. But if it's not easy being green for *Platée*, then the gods, satyrs, and animated flora and fauna of her swamp don't come off much better. They're a jaded, randy lot, as ready to snicker at the misfortune of others as to sing and dance. What elevates the farcical doings, of course, is Rameau's score, which rises out of the commonplace into the rare. Rameau and librettist Adrien-Joseph Le Valois d'Orville make fun of their froggy heroine, but their *opéra bouffe* finds time for the sublime.

Platée has met her match in the triumvirate of creative talents bringing the work to New York City Opera this month. Director and choreographer Mark Morris has choreographed a jaw-dropping variety of works and brought

Jean-Paul
Fouchécourt as
Platée



BILL GOBNER

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

1999-2000 SEASON

SEPTEMBER 11-NOVEMBER 21, 1999

MARCH 3-APRIL 23, 2000

Sopranos

Adina Aaron* Jennifer Aylmer Suzanne Balaes Valerie Bernhardt Jeanette Blakeney*
Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs* Christine Brandes* Amy Burton Sabrina Elayne Carten*
Cristina Castaldi* Alison Chaney* Cynthia Clayton Elisabeth Comeaux Tracy Dahl*
Kishna Davis* Mary Dunleavy Lauren Flanigan Robin Follman* Sari Gruber
Holly Hall* Bridget Hendrix Cheryl Hickman* Wendy Hill Shelley Jameson* Jane Jennings*
Amy Johnson Anita Johnson Quanda Johnson* Oksana Krovytska Aline Kutan*
Rebecca Langhurst* Amy Lawrence* Yunah Lee Lesley Leighton* Marquita Lister*
Margaret Lloyd* Nancy Allen Lundy Marie Mascari* Leslie McBride* Monique McDonald
Tonna Miller* Marie Plette Kristen Plumley* Alaine Rodin* Jami Rogers Elizabeth Lyra Ross*
Lisa Saffer Jody Sheinbaum* Barbara Shirvis Angela Simpson* Nkenge Simpson-Hoffman*
Lori Stinson* Camilla Tilling* Verda Lee Tudor* Laura Knoop Very Sally Wolf

Mezzo-sopranos

Jill Bosworth Luretta Bybee Beth Clayton* Sarah Connolly* Leah Creek Kathleen Flynn*
Katharine Goeldner* Emily Golden Jennifer Hines* Kathryn Honan-Carter Angela Horn
Paula Hostetler Gwendolyn Jones Katherine Keyes Mimi Lerner Lorraine Hunt Lieberson
Olga Lomteva* Ruthann Manley* Melissa Maravell Marion Pratnicki* Paula Rasmussen
Jennifer Roderer* Elizabeth Shammash* Leah Summers Laura Tucker Tara Venditti* Maria Zifchak*

Countertenors

Daniel Gundlach* Bejun Mehta

Tenors

Enrique Abdala* David Adams* Barry Banks* Jonathan Boyd* Benjamin Brecher
William Burden Matthew Chellis Dwayne Clark* John Daniecki William Ferguson*
Duane Martin Foster* Jean-Paul Fouchécourt* Jeffrey Francis* Gordon Gietz Jonathan Green
Theodore Green* Michael Hendrick Gergory Hostetler Christopher Jackson John Lankston
Jeffrey Lentz Robert Mack* John McVeigh Gregory Mercer* Harry Nicoll* Roger Ohlsen
David Ossenfort* Beau Palmer Louis Perry Matthew Polenzani Alfredo Portilla Gerard Powers*
Brian Register* Jeffrey Reynolds* Andrew Richards Rafael Rojas Philip Salmon*
Joel Sorensen Kurt Streit* Carl Tanner Mark A. Thomsen Thomas Trotter Jeffrey Weber

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Kevin Burdette* Patrick Carfizzi* Scott Cheffer* Michael Chioldi Troy Cook* George Cordes
James Creswell* Richard Crist* Brian Davis* Mark Delavan Bernard Deletré* Marcus DeLoach*
Michael Devlin Herb Downer* Dean Ely William Fleck Kenneth Floyd Jake Gardner* Kevin Glavin
John Hancock Samuel Hepler* Ron Hilley Richard Hobson Philip Horst* Ed Huls
Dominic Infererra* Monte Jaffe Nicolai Janitzky* Michael Kavalhuna* Jeffrey Kneebone
Jorge Lagunes William Ledbetter Michael Lofton Lester Lynch* James Maddalena
Christopher Mooney* Julian Patrick Jonathan Peck* Keith Phares Edward Pleasant*
Franco Pomponi* Alvy Powell* Stephen Powell John Rath* Leonard Rowe* Valerian Ruminski*
Roberto Scaltriti* Boyd Schlaefer Daniel Shigo Peter Strummer
Sanford Sylvan Mel Ulrich Michael Wanko* Don Yule

Actors

Herb Downer* Wynn Harmon* Jonathan Peck* John Henry Thomas*

Solo Dancers

Gregorio De Silva Sara Erde Esperanza Galan

Conductors

Richard Bado* Daniel Beckwith* Steuart Bedford* Harry Bicket John DeMain*
Jane Glover William Barto Jones* Christopher Larkin George Manahan Brent McMunn
Steven Mosteller Joseph Rescigno Stewart Robertson Gerald Steichen Gary Thor Wedow

** Debut with New York City Opera*

New York State Theater reconstruction funded by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.

The theater is owned by the City of New York, which has given funds for its refurbishment and which provides an operating subsidy through the Department of Cultural Affairs. Additional funding for this season has been received from a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

New York City Opera is sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc. United Airlines is the official airline of New York City Opera. Lufthansa provides international travel for New York City Opera.

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Marilyn Armstrong Lee Bellaver Jill Bosworth Frank Burzio Madeleine Bush
Harris Davis Mia DiMario Neil Eddinger Bernadette Fiorella Don Henderson
Bridget R. Hendrix Ron Hilley Gregory Hostetler Paula Hostetter Christopher Jackson
Katherine Keyes Paula Liscio Olga Lomteva Melissa Maravell Leslie McBride
Roger Ohlsen Beth Pensiero Louis Perry Boyd Schlaefer Daniel Shigo Phil Sneed
Verda Lee Tudor Jeffrey Weber Deborah Williams Edward Zimmerman

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Shannon Carson Aixa Cruz-Falu* Mark Cummings Charlotte Detrick Daniel Egan
Brenda Fairaday Ron Forsmo Joan Fuerstman Frank Haggard Linda Hayse
Jason Hendrix Georgette Hutchins* Juan Ibarra Renee Jarvis William Lagundino*
Rainer Lokken Mukund Marathe Peter Maravell Kellie McCurdy Marlene Moore
Cynthia Reinhardt Anne Elise Richie Ivan Rivera Paula Jean Rocheleau* Patricia Rogers
Danielle Sinclair Paul Smith* Spencer Smith Kurt Steinhauer Kathleen Sullivan
Tamara Tarby Michael Testa Pamela Thomas Lloyd Thompkins Amie Thompson*
G. Michael Tucci John Uehlein Janet Villas Eric Von Bleicken Mary Washburn
Elisabeth White Patrick Wickham* George Wyman

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Elizabeth Dietrich Henry Dinhofer Rebecca Dinhofer David Down Gabriel Garzon-Montano
Luna Garzon-Montano Madeleine Gelblum Philippe-Olivier Gregori Keefer Johns Evan Kaplan
Benjamin Katz Alexander Kehr Anastasia Kehr Mikhail Kofman Christine de La Chapelle
Kayla Leacock James Luccarelli Evan Maltby David Mazzucchi Makana McDonald
Elliot Morse Hannah Overton Antonia Perez Sebastian Perez Lila Pollack
Grace Price Samantha Rakosi Eddie Rakowicz Taylor Rathus Rachel Rosenfield
Adrian Ross Caroline Ross Noah Ruede Zachary Scalzo Bronwyn Schlaefer
Matt Sinsheimer Tisha Sobel Marissa Von Bleicken Verne Watley Laura Wolfgang

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Susannah Israel Candace Itow Cynthia Izoldi Terry Lacy
Brandon L. Saxon William Ward Bryant Young

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John Henry Thomas Raven Wilkinson

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Jonathan Eaton Cynthia Edwards David Grabarkewitz Beth Greenberg Mark Lamos
Leon Major Lotfi Mansouri Mark Morris* Suzanne Perkins* Mike Phillips
James Robinson Graziella Sciutti Albert Sherman Mark Streshinsky*
Tazewell Thompson* Stephen Wadsworth

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Designers

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Susan Brown Joseph A. Citarella Pat Collins* John Conklin Jeff Davis Candice Donnelly*
Jeff Harris Constance Hoffman James F. Ingalls* Peter Kaczorowski Warren Karp*
Adrienne Lobel* Thomas Lynch Mark McCullough Isaac Mizrahi* Allen Moyer
Denise O'Brien* Anna Oliver Nancy Potts Dunya Ramicova Clint Ramos*
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Stephen Strawbridge Leon E. Wiebers Robert Wierzel Michael Yeagan

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Gerald Steichen Susan Woodruff Versage

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John H. Finen III* Rupert Hemmings Peggy Imbrie Cindy Knight
John Knudsen Roxanne Prokop* Rachel Stern

**Debut with New York City Opera*

***On leave of absence*

Saturday Evening, April 22, 2000, 8:00–10:45

Platée

Comédie lyrique in a prologue and three acts

Music by Jean-Philippe Rameau

Libretto by Adrien-Joseph Le Valois d'Orville

after Jacques Autreau's play Platée, ou Junon jalouse

Conductor	Daniel Beckwith
Director and Choreographer	Mark Morris
Set Conceived and Designed by	Adrianne Lobel
Costume Designer	Isaac Mizrahi
Lighting Designer	James F. Ingalls
Supertitles	Judy Mackerras

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Bacchus—God of Wine	Guillermo Resto
Secretary	Michelle Yard
Thespis—Inventor of Comedy	Matthew Chellis
Satyr—Goat-Man	John Rath
Painter	John Heginbotham
Dyke	Julie Worden
Baroness	Ruth Davidson
Sailor	Joe Bowie
Showgirl	Rachel Murray
Policeman	Matthew Rose
Thalie—Muse of Comedy	Christine Brandes
Momus—Personification of Sarcasm	Bernard Deletré
L'Amour—God of Love	Amy Burton
Snake	Mireille Radwan-Dana
Cockatiel	Charlton Boyd
Alligator	Marjorie Folkman
Peacock	Shawn Gannon
Toad	Lauren Grant
Blue Jay	David Leventhal
Firebird	June Omura
Newt	Kim Reis
Cithéron—King	John Rath
Mercure—Messenger to the Gods	Matthew Chellis
Clarine—Lizard in Waiting	Christine Brandes
Platée—Naiad, Water Nymph	Jean-Paul Fouchécourt
Lizard	Ruth Davidson
Duck	Rachel Murray
Frog	Matthew Rose
Robin	Julie Worden
Iris—Rainbow Goddess	Michelle Yard
Aquilons—Personifications of the Wind	Joe Bowie, John Heginbotham, Peter Kyle, Gregory Nuber
Jupiter—God of Gods	Bernard Deletré
Momus—Personification of Sarcasm	Philip Salmon

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

<i>Ass—Manifestations of Jupiter</i>	Charlton Boyd, Marjorie Folkman
<i>Owl</i>	June Omura
<i>Feathered Birds</i>	Shawn Gannon, David Leventhal, Rachel Murray, June Omura, Julie Worden
<i>La Folie—Personification of Folly</i>	Amy Burton
<i>Babies</i>	Charlton Boyd, Marjorie Folkman
<i>Scholars</i>	Lauren Grant, Michelle Yard
<i>Tortoises</i>	David Leventhal, June Omura
<i>Snakes</i>	Ruth Davidson, Mireille Radwan-Dana
<i>Junon—Goddess of Gods</i>	Katharine Goeldner
<i>Frog Attendants</i>	Shawn Gannon, Matthew Rose
<i>Graces</i>	Charlton Boyd, Lauren Grant, Marjorie Folkman
<i>Satyrs—Goat-Men</i>	Joe Bowie, John Heginbotham, Peter Kyle, Gregory Nuber

Mark Morris Dance Group

Joe Bowie, Charlton Boyd, Ruth Davidson, Seth Davis*, Marjorie Folkman,
Shawn Gannon, Lauren Grant, John Heginbotham, Peter Kyle, David Leventhal,
Rachel Murray, Gregory Nuber, June Omura, Mireille Radwan-Dana, Kim Reis,
Guillermo Resto, Matthew Rose, Julie Worden, Michelle Yard

* understudy

Continuo:

<i>Harpsichord</i>	Daniel Beckwith, William Barto Jones
<i>Viola da gamba</i>	Mary Springfels
<i>Lute, Archlute</i>	Lucy Cross
<i>Lute, Theorbo, Baroque Guitar</i>	Daniel Swenberg

<i>Chorus Master</i>	Gary Thor Wedow
<i>Musical Preparation</i>	William Barto Jones, Susan Woodruff Versage, Lynn Baker
<i>Assistant Directors</i>	Mike Phillips, David Grabarkewitz, Beth Greenberg
<i>Stage Managers</i>	Anne Dechêne, Cindy Knight, Rupert Hemmings
<i>Assistants to Mr. Morris</i>	Susan Hadley, Joe Bowie, Tina Fehlandt

The performance will be presented in two acts with one intermission.

This edition of Rameau's *Platée* was edited for the Mark Morris Dance Group
by Nicholas McGegan and published by the Arcadian Company.

Supertitles used by arrangement with Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

Production Fund support has been provided by the Lila Acheson and DeWitt Wallace Fund for
Lincoln Center, established by the founders of The Reader's Digest Association, Inc.

The Florence Gould Foundation generously supports French Repertory
at New York City Opera.

New York City Opera is sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

A Chair for Conductors has been established by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.

(continued on page 45)



Swamp things:
Morris thinks
of *Platée* as
a "ballet
bouffon"

sharp insights to opera directing. Set designer Adrienne Lobel first worked with Morris on the landmark world premiere production of John Adams' *Nixon in China*, and they've since collaborated often. Lobel has a hyperactive career of her own, too, and has designed for opera, dance, and Broadway (Sondheim's *Passion*, among other shows). Costume designer Isaac Mizrahi comes to the theater from the runways of Seventh Avenue, where he's beloved by fashionistas for his fresh take on American fashion.

Lobel and Mizrahi have each worked with Morris separately but the three had never worked as a team until *Platée* brought them together. It's a match made in *opéra bouffe* heaven.

STAGEBILL: *You've directed and choreographed other works to early and Baroque music. How did you discover *Platée*?*

MARK MORRIS: I know lots of Rameau. For years I'd been thinking of doing a Rameau number like *Castor and Pollux*. Brian MacMaster at the Edinburgh Festival suggested that I listen to *Platée*. Usually when somebody suggests a piece of music, I automatically don't like it—especially if it's great. I listened to *Platée*, I loved it, and decided to do it.

STAGEBILL: *For *Platée*, you didn't banish the singers to the pit, as you have with some works in the past.*

MORRIS: Why do people always say "banish"? Because on occasion I've done operas where I "banish" the singers to the pit? Please—the orchestra is "banished" to the pit all the time. *Dido and Aeneas* has singers in the pit, but I don't think of it as banished. I'm working on *Four Saints in Three Acts*, where I'm banishing the singers to the pit. In the case of *Dido* and *Four Saints*, it's partly because of rehearsal time. To get a chorus on and off is a pain in the ass no matter what, and those particular operas switch scenes quickly, so it doesn't work well with singers. Dancers do it better. In the case of the Rameau, that's not a problem. So I banish the singers to the stage.

STAGEBILL: *It sounds like your directoral decision was driven by expedience.*

MORRIS: No. It's a theatrical decision. As far as I'm concerned, opera has singers in it. Occasionally, I decide that dancers would do better in the roles than singers. The scenes in this opera are long, however, and you're not going to do a long conversation through mime. Jean-Paul Fouchécourt [who plays *Platée*] is a genius—*genius*—and could do the whole thing by himself.

STAGEBILL: *What about the story did you find compelling?*

MORRIS: It's funny, for one thing, which is great. It was a period with a kind of mean, dwarf-kicking comedy. We think we're beyond that now. I was keen for it not to be staged in the standard Baroque style, or like the work of Baroque-reconstructive choreographers, who I often like. That's not what I wanted to do this time. I call *Platée* a *ballet bouffon*. ➤

ISAAC MIZRAHI: What makes *Platée* a vaudeville is the sound of Jean-Paul Fouchécourt's voice. It's not just a tenor, it's a funny, comic voice. This opera is not politically correct. There's no way to make it kind to animals or to ugly people. It's mean, even though *Platée* finally wins, in a sad way.

STAGEBILL: *The opera was first performed to celebrate the marriage of the son of Louis XV to a Spanish princess who was apparently not very attractive.*

ADRIANNE LOBEL: That performance must have been like a Friar's Roast.

STAGEBILL: *Where did Platée's look come from? When you presented it to the singer, did you say, "Here's the design. We're going to paint you green"?*

MIZRAHI: Singers and dancers always struggle with costumes, but singers tend to want costumes more than dancers, who don't want to wear anything but rehearsal clothes. With singers, it helps them get into character when

they see how they will look. *Platée's* look came from reading the text. The only way you can possibly get away with being so mean to her is if she's very vain. I kept thinking about Margaret Dumont, from the Marx Brothers movies. Here's this big dowager, surrounded by men pretending to be in love with her. At the last minute they cut her off, and she doesn't even notice, she just keeps talking and waving her lorgnette. She's fabulous, she's not just sad. At the end, it's this cruel joke on *Platée*, but you know she'll get over it because she's so vain.

LOBEL: We also watched *Microcosmos*, the nature documentary from a couple of years ago.

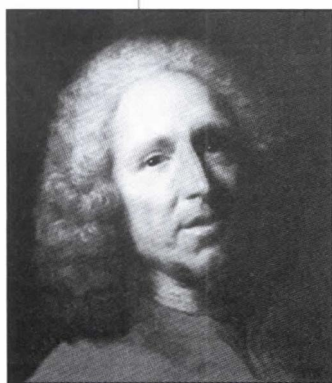
MORRIS: It's a movie with the newest in micrography. It's tiny mosquitoes, drinking a drop of water. We showed it to the dancers for possible behavior patterning. The movie helped us decide how to make the characters look very small.

LOBEL: In the original libretto, the Prologue is in a vineyard, and the rest of the opera takes place in *Platée's* swamp. The problem that I faced is that it needed a clear dance floor. When you think swamp, you think organic shapes, lily pads, and levels.

MIZRAHI: Dripping things.

LOBEL: And bad, carved styrofoam scenery. Which I really hate. One of the nice things about opera projects is that you have time to listen to the music and to mull. I thought of the restaurant that used to be Harvey's Chelsea, where Mark and I had most of our meetings for the shows we've done. I thought about how old-style bars often have an aquarium or a fish tank, and as you drink you stare at the little creatures inside. I thought, the vineyard should be a bar, and the rest of the opera can take place in the terrarium. When I came back and we had our meeting, I began by saying, "I have a really dumb idea." Of course Mark sat up and said, "Tell us, tell us." The great thing about this design is that because it's a terrarium it becomes artificial, and that's a much more Baroque environment. The floor could be flat—a dance floor—and you could have painted backdrops that look like those things you tape to the back of an aquarium. The set has those artificial-looking trees, and little pieces of wood that your animals can crawl under. The research was done at Petland.

MIZRAHI: What affected me was that *Microcosmos* showed a close-up of, say, a lizard that was the size of a whole movie screen. It was so amazing to



Jean-Philippe
Rameau

see the giant scale of those patterns. It also had a cartoon effect, and I thought that would make this opera more now, to be funny. The minute Mark and Adrienne told me the Prologue takes place in a bar, I thought of those Weegee photographs of bars in Midtown. There were baronesses and sailors and showgirls, and you wouldn't be surprised if you saw a satyr among the people in those photographs. So I did costumes for the people you might see in that bar.



Gods and monsters: a stirring scene from *Platée*

freedom to do whatever we want. I think it goes, *Formons-nous un nouveau spectacle*. "Let's make a new show."

STAGEBILL: So often, when we think of the Baroque era, it seems so courtly and staid. And stately.

MORRIS: Wrong. Baroque music is *dansant*. Every scrap of music from that period, which was long, is based on dance rhythms. Whether it's actually to be danced to remains debatable. Things might have been formal, in a way, but there was also slapstick humor.

I get the question all the time: Why Baroque music? Because it's great. There's a giant, miraculous world of emotion and drama and passion in Baroque music, and if you present it with a stick up your butt it's never going to be interesting. The great mad scenes of Handel—brilliant and frightening. I'm for the fact that old music has become popular, but I'm way against the preciousness that has happened with early music. When the early music movement started, it was sexy, funny, fabulous, dissonant, beautiful music.

LOBEL: Ultimately, it has to be a good show.

MORRIS: In *Platée*, the only things we cut musically were a couple of repeats in the dances. You would think, because I'm a choreographer foremost, that I would want only dancing. That's not true. I want only music because I'm an opera director and a choreographer. So all we did was pare down some of the repeats in a few of the dance suites. But not a note of the sung music is gone. Isn't that fabulous?

STAGEBILL: The production has a cartoonish quality. The king's crown is tilted; things look off-kilter.

MORRIS: In the score, it says things like, "The Dance of the Babies and the Scholars." That's funny. It's written that way: this is the baby music, and this is the scholar music. And so we decided, let's dress the cast as scholars and as babies.

MIZRAHI: Because it says so in the score. I think it looks like a new *opéra bouffon*. It doesn't matter that it was written 300 years ago. If this was a new opera we would do it the same way. We didn't make anything up.

LOBEL: The Prologue gives us the

Robert Sandla is Stagebill's Executive Editor. He writes frequently about the performing arts.

ON STAGE AT CITY OPERA



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BILL COOPER

PLATÉE by Jean-Philippe Rameau

Dance visionary Mark Morris and fashion designer extraordinaire Isaac Mizrahi team up with the Mark Morris Dance Group in an exhilarating spin on Rameau's 18th-century *comédie-ballet*. 6 performances, April 11–22.

Tue, Wed, & Thu night performances begin at 7:30,
Fri & Sat night performances
at 8:00, weekend matinees at 1:30.
For tickets, call Ticketmaster at

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New York State Theater Box Office.

2000 SPRING SEASON

SATmat	APRIL 1	MOTHER
SAT	APRIL 1	CARMEN
SUNmat	APRIL 2	TOSCA
TUE	APRIL 4	CLEMENZA
THU	APRIL 6	CLEMENZA
FRI	APRIL 7	CARMEN
SATmat	APRIL 8	MOTHER
SAT	APRIL 8	TOSCA
SUNmat	APRIL 9	CLEMENZA
TUE	APRIL 11	PLATÉE
WED	APRIL 12	CLEMENZA
THU	APRIL 13	CARMEN
FRI	APRIL 14	PLATÉE
SATmat	APRIL 15	CARMEN
SAT	APRIL 15	CLEMENZA
SUNmat	APRIL 16	PLATÉE
TUE	APRIL 18	PLATÉE
THU	APRIL 20	PLATÉE
FRI	APRIL 21	CARMEN
SATmat	APRIL 22	TOSCA
SAT	APRIL 22	PLATÉE
SUNmat	APRIL 23	CARMEN

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ENGLISH HORN
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MOTHER OF US ALL: Susan B. Anthony and selected principal costumes by Donna Langman Costumes Couture.

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Platée Synopsis

Prologue—Ideas: Thespis is sleeping it off. A Satyr sings of drinking. Thespis wakes up and sings a love song to Bacchus. He then embarrasses all by exposing their infidelities. Thalie and Momus arrive and remind Thespis that the gods behave in the same way. Momus begins a story about Junon's jealousy of Jupiter. L'Amour interrupts and insists on being included. They sing of putting on a new kind of show.

Act I—Plans: Cithéron appeals to the gods to end the terrible weather. Mercure appears and tells him that the storms are caused by Jupiter and Junon's jealous quarrels. Sent by Jupiter, Mercure is looking for a way to teach Junon a lesson. Cithéron suggests a prank: let Jupiter pretend to propose to Platée, just to make Junon really jealous. Mercure goes to tell Jupiter the clever plan. Enter Platée, who sings of the swamp. What a place to fall in love! and she's long loved Cithéron. Clarine is unimpressed. The swamp creatures dance. Mercure announces to Platée that Jupiter will be down soon to woo her. She can't wait. Clarine sings the sun away. Rain dances. Mercure spots Iris leading the Aquilons, who come to clear the area for Jupiter's landing.

Act II—Metamorphoses: Mercure has misdirected Junon to delay her arrival. Jupiter and Momus come down in a cloud. Cithéron and Mercure hide and watch. Platée is attracted to the cloud. Jupiter appears to her as an ass, an owl, and a man. He says he wants her. She is overwhelmed. Everyone laughs at her. Enter La Folie, who sings of...folly. She has stolen Apollon's lyre and is feeling musical. Diverse dances. A hymn to Marriage and to the coronation of Platée.

Act III—Return: Junon can't find the cheating Jupiter and she's furious at Mercure. But he convinces her to hide in order to observe the wedding. A procession. Another procession. Everyone's invited, but Platée doesn't see L'Amour. Mercure and Jupiter make a long dance longer. Platée has anxiety. Momus, disguised as L'Amour, shows up to officiate. He tells Platée how sad marriage can be. La Folie makes fun of him. Dances in honor of Platée. Just as Jupiter is swearing his vow, Junon bursts in. She's shocked by Platée's looks. The joke is over. Jupiter and Junon make up. Platée is very angry and blames it all on Cithéron. The gods return to Olympus. Platée goes back home.

—Mark Morris

Note on the Opera

In 1745 Jean-Philippe Rameau was asked to produce one of the seven musical spectacles to be performed in celebration of the marriage of King Louis XV's son, crown prince Louis, to Princess Maria Teresa of Spain at Versailles. To fill the last-minute gap left by Royer's failure to complete his commissioned *Pandore*, Rameau offered *Platée*, a work he had already nearly finished. Apparently, the Duc de Richelieu, the King's right-hand man, didn't read the libretto too closely before approving it: the plot revolves around a homely but vain petty potentate, who, arrogant enough to set her romantic sights on Jupiter, ends up becoming the butt of a most uncharitable joke. Not the most tasteful entertainment for a royal wedding—particularly one in which the bride was "not physically well served by nature," according to Malherbe.

The madcap scene for *Platée* is set in its Prologue, in which some drunken cronies of Bacchus—Thespis and the muses Thalie and Momus—give birth to comedy, vowing to "wage a never-ending battle against absurdity! We'll spare neither mortals nor gods!"

And they're as good as their word. Gods and mortals, royalty and commoners, French ballet and Italian opera—nothing escapes the rapier of Rameau's *ballet bouffon* (farcical ballet). Platée, the "heroine," is a cave-dwelling, web-footed Swamp Thing who rules over a marsh full of croaking, buzzing amphibians and insects. To underline her absurdity, Rameau made Platée a "drag" role for a high tenor—an anomaly in French opera. And she's ridiculous less for her unfortunate looks than for foolishly aspiring to join the inane Olympians—shallow, bored, and obsessed with appearance, status, and sex (not unlike the denizens of Versailles, *peut-être?*).

—Cori Ellison

Meet the Artists

Christine Brandes, soprano. Birthplace: Canton, Ohio. This season at NYCO: debuts as Thalie/Clarine in *Platée*. Career highlights: Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Company of Philadelphia, Opera Pacific, and Opéra de Montréal and Québec; Morgana in Handel's *Alcina* with Opéra de Nancy; Drusilla in Opera Columbus' *L'incoronazione di Poppea*; Alceste in Handel's *Arianna* with Göttingen Handel Festival; Amor in North American tour of *Orfeo ed Euridice* directed by Mark Morris; numerous concert appearances, including engagements with Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Moscow Chamber Orchestra, and Les Arts Florissants; recordings with EMI, BMG/Conifer Classics, Harmonia Mundi USA, and Koch International. Upcoming engagements: *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* with Simon Rattle and Los Angeles Philharmonic; *Carmina Burana* with Houston Symphony; *Acis and Galatea* with Glimmerglass Opera; Pamina in *The Magic Flute* with Opera Company of Philadelphia; Bach Cantatas with John Eliot Gardner.

Amy Burton, soprano. Birthplace: New York, New York. This season at NYCO: Ginevra in *Ariodante*, Alice Ford in *Falstaff*, L'Amour/La Folie in *Platée*. NYCO debut: Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, 1992. Career highlights: Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Concepcion in *L'Heure espagnole*, Romilda in *Xerxes*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Micaëla in *Carmen* at NYCO; Alice Ford at Glimmerglass; Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* at Zürich Opera; *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with l'Opéra Français; N.Y. recital debut at 92nd Street Y; performances with Scottish Opera, l'Opéra de Nice, Israel Philharmonic, New Japan Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony; New Year's Eve 2000 with Atlanta Symphony (NPR broadcast); *Opera Goes Public* at Joe's Pub; Gershwin's *Blue Monday* (Angel/EMI); Richard Wilson's *Persuasions* (Albany); NYCO Kolosvar Award winner. Upcoming: *Penelope* (world premiere) by John Musto and Denise Lanctot at 92nd Street Y, Songs of the Irish Poets at Weill Recital Hall, Liú in *Turandot* with Pittsburgh Opera, the Governess in *Turn of the Screw* with NYCO.

Katharine Goeldner, mezzo-soprano. Birthplace: Sigourney, Iowa. This season at NYCO:

debuts as Junon in *Platée*. Career highlights: Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Idamante in *Idomeneo* at Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, France; Siebel in *Faust* with Opera Omaha; Mademoiselle Mozart in Helmut Eder's *Mozart in New York* (world premiere) and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* at Salzburg Festival; as leading soloist with Germany's Kassel Staatstheater, roles include Angelina in *La Cenerentola* and Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*; U.S. tour with Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg at venues including Avery Fisher Hall and Kennedy Center; engagements with RSO-Vienna, Orchestra de la Radio France, Basque National Orchestra, and Berlin Symphony; recordings with Salzburg Chamber Philharmonic and Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg. Upcoming engagements: Fricka in *Das Rheingold* in Toulouse, Gert Kühr's *Palimpsest* at Vienna Musikverein, Weill's *The Firebrand of Florence* with Thomas Hampson at Vienna Konzerthaus, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* at NYCO.

Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, tenor. Birthplace: Blanzay, France. This season at NYCO: debuts in title role in *Platée*. Career highlights: toured internationally with Les Arts Florissants; Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in Salzburg; *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at Netherlands Opera; *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* at Geneva Opera; Berlioz' *Roméo et Juliette* and *Le nozze di Figaro* at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with Saito Kinen Orchestra and Seiji Ozawa; *Platée* and Astrologer in *The Golden Cockerel* at Royal Opera-Covent Garden; Metropolitan Opera debut as Four Servants in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*; *Platée* at Opéra Bastille; more than 70 recordings of works by Rameau, Lully, Campra, Satie, Poulenc, and more. Upcoming engagements: *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at Vienna Festwochen and Aix-en-Provence Festival, Four Servants at Choregies d'Orange and Covent Garden, *Orphée aux enfers* for Opéra de Lyon, *Platée* on tour to Geneva, Bordeaux, and Montpellier.

Matthew Chellis, tenor. Birthplace: Horton Bay, Michigan. This season at NYCO: Pedrillo in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, John Adams in *The Mother of Us All*,

Thespis/Mercure in *Platée*. NYCO debut: Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, 1995. Career highlights: Baron Lummer in *Intermezzo*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Father in *The Seven Deadly Sins*, and Nanki-Poo in *The Mikado* at NYCO; Pedrillo with Washington Opera; Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* with Opéra de Québec; Tebaldo in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* at Atlanta Opera; Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* with Shreveport Opera; Tonio in *La Fille du régiment* and Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* with NYCO National Company; Rodrigo in Rossini's *La donna del lago* (American premiere) at Caramoor Festival; *Messiah* with Boston's Handel & Haydn Society conducted by Christopher Hogwood. Upcoming engagements: Almaviva with Chautauqua Opera, Six Miniatures with EOS Orchestra, Andres in *Wozzeck* with Dallas Opera.

Philip Salmon, tenor. Birthplace: London, England. This season at NYCO: debuts as Momus in *Platée*. Career highlights: Pelléas in *Pelléas et Mélisande* for Opéra Marseilles, Opéra du Rhin Strasbourg, and Welsh National Opera; Prologue/Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* for Scottish Opera and Teatro Regio in Turin; Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* for New Zealand's Wellington Opera; Agénore in *Il re pastore* for Opera North; Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* with Dublin Grand Opera; Second King in *Die Liebe der Danae* with Garsington Opera; Momus and St. Brioche in *The Merry Widow* for Royal Opera-Covent Garden; concerts with many of the leading orchestras of Britain and Europe; recordings for Deutsche Grammophon, Philips, Erato, and more. Upcoming engagements: Cecco in *Il mondo della luna* for Garsington Opera, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* for London's Chelsea Opera, *Friend of the People* at Scottish Opera, concerts in Britain and Europe.

John Rath, bass-baritone. Birthplace: Manchester, England. This season at NYCO: debuts as Cithéron/Satyr in *Platée*. Career highlights: Escamillo in Peter Brooks' production of *La trágédie de Carmen* in Paris and on tour to New York, Tokyo, and Rome, as well as on film; Doctor in *Wozzeck*, Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, and Nourabad in *Les Pêcheurs de perles* for Opera North; Second Soldier in *Salome* and Poet in Salieri's *Prima la musica, poi le parole* for Oper Frankfurt; Ferrando in *Il trovatore* for Ireland's Opera

South; Walton in *I puritani* for Royal Opera-Covent Garden; Angelo in Storace's *The Comedy of Errors* at Wexford Festival; Don Alvar in Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* at Châtelet, Dijon, and La Fenice; Masetto in *Don Giovanni* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* at Glyndebourne; recordings include *Iolanthe* and *The Gondoliers* with New D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. Upcoming: Toante in Handel's *Oreste* at Covent Garden.

Bernard Deletré, bass baritone. Birthplace: Valenciennes, France. This season at NYCO: debuts as Jupiter/Momus in *Platée*. Career highlights: Publio in *La clemenza di Tito* with Tours Opera; Jean de la Fontaine in *La Veuve et le grillon* for Péniche Opéra; Jupiter at Berkeley Festival; Giove in *La Calisto* at Glimmerglass Opera; productions with Les Arts Florissants include title role in Campra's *Idomeneo*, as well as Lully's *Atys*, Charpentier's *Médée* and *Le Malade imaginaire*; Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opéra de Nancy; *The Fairy Queen* and *Castor et Pollux* at Aix-en-Provence Festival; recital of French cantatas in New York, Arles, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv; recordings with Erato, EMI France, Adda, Opus 111, and Harmonia Mundi. Upcoming engagements: *Le Jardin des délices* for Péniche Opéra; Don Pedro in *Béatrice et Bénédict* in Nancy; Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte* and Giorgio in Bellini's *I puritani* with Opéra de Nantes.

Daniel Beckwith, conductor. Birthplace: Chicago, Illinois. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Platée*. Career highlights: *Don Giovanni* at Metropolitan Opera; *Così fan tutte* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Serse* and *Die Zauberflöte* at Seattle Opera; *Rinaldo* at Grand Théâtre de Genève; *Theodora* with Glyndebourne Festival; Opera Australia debut with *La clemenza di Tito*; *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Turandot*, and *Giulio Cesare* with Edmonton Opera; *Le nozze di Figaro* in Vancouver; *Falstaff* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Wolf Trap Opera; *Die Zauberflöte* and new production of *The Crucible* with Washington Opera; *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Cincinnati Opera; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at United Kingdom's Opera North and Florida Grand Opera; *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *Il re pastore* with Canadian Opera Company. Upcoming engagements: *Don Giovanni* at San Francisco Opera; *Così fan tutte* and *Madama Butterfly* at Lake George Opera Festival, where Mr. Beckwith is artistic director.

Mark Morris, director and choreographer. Birthplace: Seattle, Washington. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Platée*. Founded Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980 and has since created more than 100 works for the company; choreographed dances for many ballet companies, including San Francisco Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre; director of dance (1988–91) at Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels' national opera house, where he created 12 pieces, including three evening-length works, *The Hard Nut* (his comic book-inspired version of *The Nutcracker*), *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and *Dido and Aeneas*; founder of White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov; extensive work in opera as both choreographer and director, including *Platée* at Royal Opera and Edinburgh International Festival; named fellow of MacArthur Foundation; subject of biography by Joan Acocella (FSG). Upcoming productions: *Four Saints in Three Acts* (Thomson/Stein) at English National Opera, June 2000; *Sang-Froid* (Chopin) at American Dance Festival, July 2000.

Mark Morris Dance Group. Formed in 1980. One of the world's leading dance companies, Mark Morris Dance Group currently maintains a full international touring schedule, including regular appearances in Berkeley, Boston, Fairfax (Virginia), London, and at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival; three years as resident company of Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels (1988–91); featured on television programs including PBS' *Dance in America* series, A & E's *Breakfast with the Arts*, and the United Kingdom's *South Bank Show*; recently completed two film projects, Mr. Morris' *Dido and Aeneas*, winner Canada's 1997 Gemini Award (Canadian Emmy), and an Emmy Award-winning collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma entitled *Falling Down Stairs*, using Bach's Third Suite for unaccompanied cello; received Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production for *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* at English National Opera; August 2000 will perform at Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara, Japan, with Yo-Yo Ma.

Adrianne Lobel, set concept and design. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Platée*. Career highlights: set designs for Mark Morris include *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* at Brussels' La Monnaie, New York State

Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Edinburgh Festival, etc., as well as *Orfeo ed Euridice* at BAM, Edinburgh, and on U.S. tour, and *Le nozze di Figaro* at La Monnaie; *Passion, The Diary of Ann Frank*, and *On the Town* on Broadway; *Lady in the Dark* at London's National Theatre; *Street Scene* at Houston Grand Opera; *Nixon in China* at HGO, Paris' Bobigny, English National Opera, and others; *The Rake's Progress* at Théâtre du Châtelet; *The Magic Flute* for Glyndebourne; Peter Sellars' productions of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and *The Mikado*; recipient of Lucille Lortel, Obie, and Jefferson awards; teaches set design at New York University.

Isaac Mizrahi, costume designer. Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Platée*. Career highlights: as fashion designer, opened his own business in 1987, which now consists of a shoe collection, an eyewear collection, a collection of coats, and a collection of fine jewelry; subject of 1995 documentary, *Unzipped*, directed by Douglas Kieve, which won the 1995 Audience Award at Sundance Film Festival, and for which Mr. Mizrahi and Mr. Kieve received a special CFDA Award for bringing the fashion world to cinema; designed costumes for movies, theater, and dance in collaboration with such artists as Twyla Tharp, Bill T. Jones, and Mikhail Baryshnikov, as well as Mark Morris; three-time CFDA Designer of the Year award winner; named best designer of the year by Fashion Footwear Association of New York; author of comic book series, *The Adventures of Sandee the Supermodel*; attended High School of Performing Arts and Parsons School of Design.

James F. Ingalls, lighting designer. Birthplace: Hartford, Connecticut. This season at NYCO: debuts with *Platée*. Career highlights: *Wozzeck* at Metropolitan Opera; *War and Peace* and *The Flying Dutchman* for Kirov/Mariinsky Opera; *Biblical Pieces*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms*, and *Pelléas et Mélisande* at De Nederlandse Opera, all directed by Peter Sellars; *The Hard Nut*, *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and *Dido and Aeneas* for Mark Morris Dance Group; recent projects include *The Cherry Orchard* at McCarter Theatre, *Valparaiso* with Steppenwolf, and *The Invention of Love* at American Conservatory Theatre.