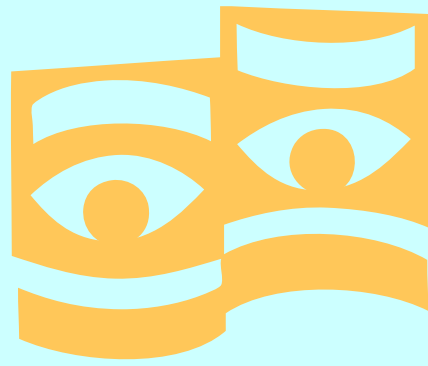


# GOTHAM chamber opera



BEHIND THE CURTAIN  
FALL 2009

*Gotham Chamber Opera is the nation's foremost company dedicated to producing rarely-performed chamber operas from the Baroque era to the present. Our mission is to present innovative, fully-staged productions of the highest quality in intimate venues.*

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## GOTHAM RECEIVES NEA GRANT

*The National Endowment for the Arts recently awarded Gotham Chamber Opera a \$25,000 American Recovery and Reinvestment Grant. Gotham was one of only 17 opera companies in the country to receive this very special recognition, and one of just three in New York, along with New York City Opera and Opera America. The NEA received stimulus funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support job retention in the performing arts sector.*

"Because these grants go to support the organizations themselves - rather than specific programs or productions - this is a vote of real confidence in Gotham as an institution," said Managing Director David Bennett. "This confirms that we now have an important national presence within the field of opera."

Please join the NEA in expressing confidence in Gotham Chamber Opera by making a tax-deductible contribution. Use the form enclosed or join online at: [www.gothamchamberopera.org/support.html](http://www.gothamchamberopera.org/support.html).

Every gift makes a difference!



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The Rose Center for Earth and Space at the American Museum of Natural History

## GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

With our inaugural newsletter, Gotham Chamber Opera intends to keep you – our loyal supporters and fans – current on the “pre-eminent small opera company in New York” according to *The New York Times*. Starting with this semi-annual dispatch, we will broadcast the company’s news: our exciting upcoming productions; bios of the fantastic artists scheduled to perform with us; reviews of our successes; and other relevant developments.

While all performing arts companies endure tough challenges these days, Gotham wants you to know that our company also enjoys towering achievements. Read on to see what ambitious plans are in our future.

Thank you for your support!

  
Ted Trussell Porter  
President of the Board

## HAYDN AT THE HAYDEN

*In January 2010, take a wondrous trip to the moon with a revolutionary new production of Joseph Haydn's delightful opera **Il mondo della luna** (*The World on the Moon*). For the first time ever, the Hayden Planetarium at the Rose Center for Earth and Space will be transformed into an intimate opera house. In an extraordinary collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History and the American*

Repertory Theater, Gotham will fuse live opera and stargazing. Taking advantage of breakthroughs in laser and light technology, the production will immerse the audience in a completely new kind of theatrical event – an out-of-this-world experience for opera lovers, science buffs, and theatergoers alike.

Gotham Chamber Opera will literally take audiences to the moon in this production of **Il mondo della luna**, Haydn's personal favorite of all his operas. Written in 1777, it's the story of a nobleman who refuses to let his daughters marry their true loves. With the help of a fake astronomer and a sleeping potion, the daughters trick their father into believing he's been sent to the moon, where he discovers they do things differently, especially when it comes to courtship. On the moon, women are allowed to choose their own husbands, and there it is even proper for a young lady to go off with a man before marriage. It is a sign of respect! After much music and merriment, everybody comes back to Earth, properly and happily matched.

The Hayden Planetarium is unlike any other. In the top half of the Hayden Sphere, the Space Theater uses the most advanced visual technology to create shows of unparalleled sophistication, realism, and excitement. The Hayden Planetarium is the largest and most powerful virtual reality simulator in the world and will provide a stunning and singularly apt environment for our production of **Il mondo della luna**.

The lift-off begins January 19, 2010, using a 180-degree dome and projections courtesy of NASA. The production will be directed by Diane Paulus, whom *Opera News* calls one of the top 25 names in U.S. opera, and whose production of *Hair* has triumphed in Central Park and on Broadway. Leading the 27-piece orchestra is Neal Goren, Artistic Director and founder of Gotham Chamber Opera.

So we hope you will get on board with Gotham, Haydn, and the Hayden and join us as we fly New York opera-lovers to the moon!

Performance dates and times: Gala Opening Performance and Reception: Tuesday, January 19th, 7:30 pm. All other performances at 8:00 pm: Wednesday, January 20th, Monday January 25th, Tuesday, January 26th, and Thursday, January 28th. Gala opening night tickets are \$500 (\$325 tax-deductible), and can be purchased by calling 212-868-4460. VIP (\$1,000) and Premium (\$2,500) Gala tickets are also available, with additional premium benefits; please call for more information.

For tickets to other performances, please call Ticket Central at 212-279-4200 or order online at [www.ticketcentral.com](http://www.ticketcentral.com). Ticket prices for all other performances are \$125, \$75, and \$30.

## NOTES FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

*In the days before easy travel, operas were often set in what would have been exotic locales for their audiences: the Arab world (Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri*, Verdi's *Nabucco*), the East (Bizet's *Pearl Fishers*, Puccini's *Turandot*, Delibes' *Lakmé*), and even the United States (Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*). But nothing compares to the bizarrerie of setting an opera on the moon, as Haydn did in **Il mondo della luna**. The idea was so twisted I found it irresistible on first sight.*

When I delved further into the work, I was delighted to discover that this setting had inspired Haydn to write some of his most varied and stupendous music. If you are looking for a super-virtuosic show-stopping soprano aria, there is nothing in the entire repertoire that surpasses Flaminia's *Ragion nell'alma sede*; for dreamy pathos, Clarice's *Quanta gente che sospira* has never been outdone; and if you're a fan of brilliant ensembles, the second-act finale of **Il mondo** is clearly the prototype for the glorious second-act finale for Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* – and loses nothing in the comparison. This is not only the best of Haydn; this is the best of music. It is, however, no secret that there is a great deal of chaff among the wheat of **Il mondo della luna**. Were there not, the piece would be in the standard repertory of every opera house today. So you will be pleased to know that the director Diane Paulus, her associate Andrew Eggert, and I have cut out the chaff, leaving you the very choicest bits.

When planning the production in 2007, I noted

**“...the Space Theater uses the most advanced visual technology to create shows of unparalleled sophistication, realism, and excitement.”**

that the orchestral forces for *Il mondo*, while not particularly large, were still too big to fit in the pit of our home theater at the Henry Street Settlement. As I began considering alternative performance spaces, I happened to take my nephew to the Hayden Planetarium at the American Museum of Natural History. I soon realized there was no venue more suitable (or more audacious) for an opera largely set on the moon than the Hayden, where we could incorporate segments of the planetarium's amazing star show into our production,

## FURTHER LISTENING

*I know of only one commercial recording of **Il mondo della luna**, and it is no longer in print. The recording was made in 1978 by Philips and features a star-studded cast conducted by Haydn specialist Antál Dorati. In the role of Buonafede, bass-baritone Alberto Trimarchi manages, through his committed portrayal, to disguise the fact that he's singing a role that is clearly written for a baritone. Edith Mathis lends her passionate voice to the role of Clarice, while Arleen Auger, as Flaminia, sings faultlessly, if missing the sense of devil-may-care abandon that the virtuosic role begs for. As their suitors, Luigi Alva is clearly way past his prime (though only 51 when the recording was made), and contralto Lucia Valentini-Terrani is terribly miscast in a role much better suited to the baritone voice. The newcomers on the recording are Frederica von Stade, with her unmistakable lovely, dark-hued timbre, and the warm-voiced Anthony Rolfe Johnson. In spite of all these fine talents, I find the recording incredibly boring, due to its languid tempi and turgid recitatives.*

Bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff included one aria and one duet from **Il mondo della luna** on his 2009 CD entitled Haydn Italian Arias. Quasthoff sings with his customary rich middle and low notes and bright, tenorial top. His musical suavity is very much in evidence here, in music that calls for humor above all else. The duet is of such scant musical value that we have cut it from our production.

thereby enabling our audience to make the trip to the moon along with Haydn's protagonists.

When I floated the idea by Diane, who is the artistic director of the American Repertory Theater at Harvard, the rightness of the concept made her practically giddy. I next proposed the idea to Ellen Futter, the president of the museum, who thought the concept intriguing. That was in November of 2007, and after a three-year gestation period that included acoustical tests and feasibility studies, we bring you **Il mondo della luna** in a co-production of our three institutions: Gotham Chamber Opera, the American Museum of Natural History, and the American Repertory Theater. It was a journey nearly as unprecedented as the one Haydn set to music in 1777.

## ARTISTIC TEAM

We have assembled a remarkable team to bring this production to life. Diane Paulus, who received a 2009 Tony Award nomination for Best Direction of a Musical for her production of *Hair*, is not only staging **Il mondo della luna**, but is responsible for all its visual elements. Read more about Paulus and her work in opera and theatre at [www.dianepaulus.net](http://www.dianepaulus.net)

Paulus first collaborated with German video artist Philip Bussmann at English National Opera, and felt that his talents and sensibility would be perfect for **Il mondo della luna**. Because of the unique demands of this production, Bussmann will be acting as our video designer, set designer, and lighting designer. To read more about Bussmann, visit his [website](http://www.philipbussmann.com).

Paulus's frequent collaborator, Anka Lupes, will be designing the costumes for the production, both moonwear and earthwear. You can see more of her work at [ankalupesdesigns.com](http://www.ankalupesdesigns.com).

## ABOUT DIRECTOR DIANE PAULUS

Fresh from the 2009 Tony Awards presentation, where her production of *Hair* was honored as the best revival of a musical, Diane Paulus shared with us her enthusiasm for her 2010 collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera on **Il mondo della luna**. Diane traces

her success in moving back and forth between working in opera and musical theater to growing up in Manhattan on 68th Street and West End Avenue, immersed from an early age in all that was going on at Lincoln Center and on Broadway. As a youth, she studied classical piano, dance at New York City Ballet's school, and, eventually, voice. Early on in her education, she was attracted to the possibilities of working in both opera and theater, and she is particularly pleased to be at American Repertory Theater, which has a distinguished history in both areas, having offered some of Peter Sellars' first operatic productions. It is a tradition she is eager to continue.

Diane especially enjoys directing opera because, among other things, the singers arrive for rehearsal fully prepared in their roles and immediately ready to begin work on staging, which is usually not the case in musical theater. She finds challenging the fact that there are no previews in opera, so one goes right from rehearsals to opening night, with no opportunities to fine tune a production in the presence of audiences.

Although she is acclaimed for her productions of Mozart's and Monteverdi's masterpieces, Diane recognizes that Haydn's operas present special challenges, since they are not always as coherent dramatically as the major works of those composers. She and Neal are working closely together to shape and edit **Il mondo della luna** to highlight both the power and charm of its music and the delights of its plot. Aiding in this process is her long-time collaborator Philip Bussmann, a video artist whom she considers an extraordinary genius. Diane also pays close attention to insuring that her casts understand every word of the text, whatever the language. Further, she personally translates and prepares the supertitles for all of her opera productions.

This distinguished director, whom we are delighted to welcome to Gotham Chamber Opera, is convinced that **Il mondo della luna** at the Hayden Planetarium, with its visual pyrotechnics, gorgeous music, and outstanding young cast, will make for a stunning show the entire family will enjoy.



## SINGERS

Our cast of **Il mondo della luna** is headed by the incomparable baritone **Marco Nisticò** in the role of Buonafede.



He played the title character of Gotham's production of Rossini's *Il signor Bruschino*.

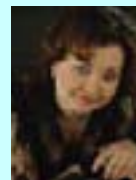
Read more about Nisticò at <http://www.randsman.com/nistico.html>



Buonafede's daughters are played by sopranos **Hanan Alattar** and **Albina Shagimuratova**.



In 2005 Alattar sang the trouser role of Alceste in Gotham Chamber Opera's production of Handel's *Arianna in Creta*. ([More](#)) and since then she has gone on to sing with many of the world's great opera companies. Read more about Hanan [here](#).



Albina Shagimuratova won the Tchaikovsky Competition gold medal in Moscow in 2007, sang the Queen of the Night in the 2008 Salzburg Festival under Muti, and repeats the role at the Met in April 2010. Learn more about this extremely impressive artist [here](#).

The daughters' suitors are played by tenor **Nicholas Coppolo** and baritone **Timothy Kuhn**.



Coppolo is in his second year at the Juilliard Opera Center and has sung leading roles throughout the U.S. He will be making his NYCO debut in Handel's *Partenope* in April 2010.

Timothy Kuhn made his New York debut in the role of Sid in Gotham Chamber Opera's production of [Albert Herring](#). Since then he has gone on to sing the title role in *Don Giovanni* with NYCO and Mozart's Count Almaviva with

Palm Beach Opera. Follow [this YouTube link](#) to hear him singing Don Giovanni's Serenade under conductor Gustavo Dudamel.



Buonafede's servant Lisetta is played by Gotham discovery mezzo-soprano **Rachel Calloway**.

She has sung with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group and various Britten roles under Lorin Maazel at the Castleton Festival. Calloway covered the leading roles in Gotham Chamber Opera's productions of *Ariadne Unhinged* and *Scenes of Gypsy Life*.



Lisetta's suitor is sung by tenor **Matthew Tuell** in his New York debut. Tuell has covered the leading tenors roles in Gotham Chamber Opera's productions of *L'isola disabitata* and *Scenes of Gypsy Life* and was recently seen as Maintop in Santa Fe Opera's production of *Billy Budd*.



## UPDATES FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

*I see Gotham as a springboard for young singers, and the opera world seems to share this view. I am often asked what became of this singer or that singer, and I would like to report on a few of our alumni in every issue of our newsletter.*

**David Adam Moore**, whom we introduced to New York audiences as Aeneas and Orphée in 2002, recently sang the role of Demetrius in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at La Scala. Since his debut with Gotham, he has sung leading roles at the Châtelet in Paris, in Hannover, Mannheim, Seattle, and dozens of other companies and made a sensation in the title role of *Billy Budd* in Tel Aviv and Pittsburgh. David and I were reunited when I conducted *Magic Flute* at NYCO in 2003 and he was an athletic Papageno. (<http://www.davidadammoore.com/>)



**Georgia Jarman**, who sang the role of Fortuna in Gotham Chamber Opera's debut production of Mozart's *Il sogno di Scipione* in 2001, has gone from strength to strength, singing the *bel canto* repertoire throughout the world. Like Moore, she was featured in *Opera News's* "Sound Bites". In May she married Micah Fortson, the production director of New Orleans Opera. To hear a sample of her recent singing, follow [this link](#). Most recently she sang Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* at the Caramoor Festival in July.

*The four singers from our most recent production, Haydn's L'isola disabitata, have sustained the momentum:*

**Takesha Meshé Kizart** flew directly from our production to Berlin, where she sang the title role in Respighi's *Marie Victoire* with the Deutsche Opera. She then went on to sing Leonora in *Il Trovatore* in Stuttgart.



**Vale Rideout** sang the title role in *Faust* in April with Opera Tampa, Britten's *War Requiem* with the New York Philharmonic in June, and will sing the role of Edgardo in *Lucia* with Central City Opera in August.

Rideout made his debut with Gotham in the chorus of *Die schwarze Spinne* (as a drunk, slatternly transvestite) in 2004.



**Valerie Ogbonnaya** just returned from Tulsa Opera, where she received rave reviews for her performance of Gianetta in *L'elisir d'amore*. Ogbonnaya is marrying tenor Angus Wood in Houston in September.



**Tom Corbeil** sang the role of Colline in *La Bohème* with Opera Omaha and Sacramento Opera. As a direct result of our Haydn production, Corbeil has been hired to sing Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Fort Worth Opera and has signed with ADA Artists.



Look for further updates on these and other Gotham Chamber Opera alumni in future issues.

# L'ISOLA DISABITATA



Last February, Gotham Chamber Opera initiated its own observance of the bicentennial of Haydn's death with the New York City premiere production of *L'isola disabitata*. We want to share with you *Opera News's* review of this highly-acclaimed offering, featured on our website: <http://www.gothamchamberopera.org/news/isola.html>

You may also be interested in viewing the Channel Thirteen Sunday Arts video from February 24th which shows footage from the opera, as well as information about Gotham Chamber Opera. <http://www.thirteen.org/sundayarts/the-gotham-chamber-opera/245>





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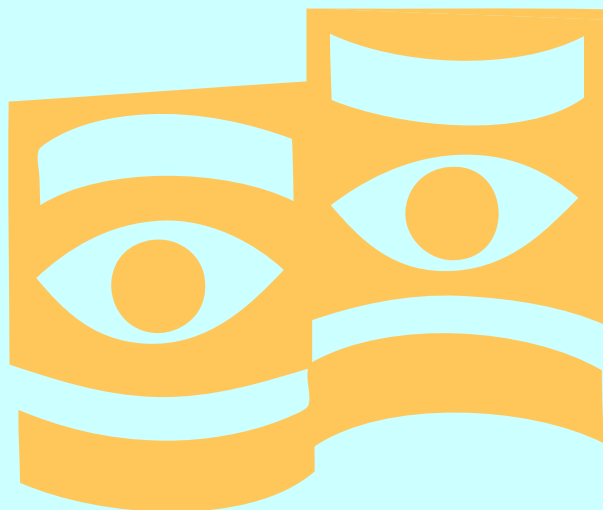
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**GOTHAM**  
chamber opera



where opera gets intimate