

Chicago Tribune

FALL PREVIEW: CLASSICAL

10 concerts that will keep audiences humming

BY John von Rhein, Classical Music Critic
September 13, 2009

10 must-see events:

You would never guess the economy remains on the ropes nationwide, based on the sheer quantity, quality and diversity of classical music in and around **Chicago** this season. Here are 10 major offerings you'll want to check out between now and the end of the year:

1 "**Tosca**," A Lyric Opera of Chicago season laden with crowd-pleasers gets under way with the Puccini warhorse opera buffs never can get enough of. Deborah Voigt stars in the fall performances, with Vladimir Galouzine as her lover, Cavaradossi, and James Morris as their nemesis, Baron Scarpia. Music director Andrew Davis conducts. Sept. 26-Oct. 13; \$33-\$207, \$20 students. **Civic Opera House**, 20 N. Wacker Drive; 312-332-2244

2 **Music in the Loft**. This is a good time to sample this high-quality chamber music series, presented in an intimate West Loop setting. The 17th season includes such promising ensembles as the youthful Biava Quartet and showcases music by resident composer Conrad Tao, an astonishing 14-year-old, Illinois-born prodigy. Begins Oct. 3-4; \$20, \$10 students. 1017 W. Washington Blvd.; 312-243-9233

3 "**Faust**." Lyric Opera will give the Devil his due this season with productions of two different works based on the Faust legend. First up is a revival of the Gounod favorite, with the acclaimed Polish tenor Piotr Beczala sharing the title role with Joseph Kaiser. Ana Maria Martinez is the seduced and abandoned Marguerite, with Rene Pape and Kyle Ketelsen alternating as the sardonic Mephistopheles. Andrew Davis conducts. Oct. 5-Nov. 7; \$33-\$207, \$20 students. Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive; 312-332-2244

4 **Frederic Rzewski**. The characteristic drive and intensity of Rzewski's music should emerge in performances given under auspices of the Chicago Symphony's MusicNOW series, Oct. 5 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance 205 E. Randolph St.; and the **University of Chicago's** Contempo series, Nov. 14 in Ganz Hall, **Roosevelt University**, 430 S. Michigan Ave. Cliff

Colnot conducts; eighth blackbird and the Pacifica Quartet share the latter program. 312-294-3000; \$20 (Music NOW). 773-702-8068; \$15, \$4 students (Contempo)

5 Music of the Baroque. Music director Jane Glover opens the season with a concert version of Handel's delightful masque "Acis and Galatea." Oct. 16 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St.; and Oct. 18 at First United Methodist Church, 1630 Hinman Ave., **Evanston**. \$30-\$75; 312-551-1414

6 "Ernani." This new Lyric Opera production infuses Verdi's early blood-and-thunder masterpiece with the proven star power of Salvatore Licitra, Sondra Radvanovsky and Boaz Daniel. Renato Palumbo conducts, Jose Maria Condemi directs. Oct. 27-Nov. 23; \$33-\$207, \$20 students. Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive; 312-332-2244

7 Berlin Philharmonic. Tickets are priced in the ionosphere for this event, which marks the first visit by the fabled Berliners and chief conductor Simon Rattle since 2003. Still, hearing one of the world's symphonic elites performing its core Germanic rep -- Wagner, Schoenberg and Brahms -- makes it worth every penny. Nov. 16; \$56-\$199. Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.; 312-294-3000

8 ICE and Kaija Saariaho. The adventurous, Chicago-based International Contemporary Ensemble affords listeners a rare glimpse into the luminous, mystical chamber music of the celebrated Finnish composer. Nov. 19; \$20-\$25, \$10 students. Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.; 312-280-2660

9 "Katya Kabanova." Leos Janacek's masterwork returns to Lyric Opera after a long absence, this time with the riveting Karita Mattila as the tragic heroine. Markus Stenz paces the **Jonathan Miller** production, borrowed from the Metropolitan Opera. Nov. 22-Dec. 12; \$33-\$207, \$20 students. Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive; 312-332-2244

10 "The Merry Widow." Franz Lehar's tuneful operetta returns to Lyric Opera in a new production by Chicago director Gary Griffin. Elizabeth Futral and Roger **Honeywell** portray the romantic leads, with Emmanuel Villaume cooking a musical souffle in the pit. Dec. 5-Jan. 16; \$33-\$207, \$20 students. Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive; 312-332-2244