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Verdi's Grand Egyptian Pageant *Aida* Premieres On THIRTEEN's *Great Performances at the Met*

**Violeta Urmana plays the title role with
New choreography by Alexei Ratmansky**

New York, NY (January 10, 2010) — *Aida* makes its debut on THIRTEEN'S ***Great Performances at the Met*** with soprano **Violeta Urmana** singing the title role for the first time with the company and mezzo-soprano **Dolora Zajick** as Amneris, one of her most acclaimed signature roles. Heldentenor **Johan Botha** sings Radamès, a role for which he was acclaimed in the 2006 revival of the opera, joined by baritone **Carlo Guelfi** as Amonasro, bass **Roberto Scandiuzzi** as Ramfis, and bass **Stefan Kocán**, who makes his debut as the King. Italian maestro **Daniele Gatti** conducts *Aida* for the first time at the Met. It marks the return of the Italian maestro, who last appeared with the company in the 1994-95 season, when he made his debut with *Madama Butterfly*. **Alexei Ratmansky**, artist-in-residence with American Ballet Theatre and former artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet, makes his Met debut creating new choreography for the *Aida* ballets, offering the finishing touch of “firsts” for the production.

Hosted by opera star Renée Fleming, *Aida* airs on THIRTEEN'S ***Great Performances at the Met*** on PBS on Sunday, January 31 at noon EST (check local listings).

Great Performances at the Met is a presentation of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America's most prolific and respected public media providers.

Great Performances at the Met: Aida is the third of 10 productions airing this season during the 2009-2010 series. The performance is sung in Italian with English surtitles. The conductor is **Paolo Carignani**. The production is by **Sonja Frisell**; the set designer is **Gianni Quaranta**; **Dada Saligeri** created the costumes; the lighting designer is **Gil Wechsler**. **Gary Halvorson** directed for television.

Great Performances is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers and PBS. Corporate support for ***Great Performances at the Met*** is provided by Toll Brothers, America's luxury home-builder®.

Visit **Great Performances Online** at www.pbs.org/gperf for additional information on this and other ***Great Performances*** programs. For the Met, Mia Bongiovanni and Elena Park are Supervising Producers, and Louisa Briccetti and Victoria Warivonchik are Producers. Peter Gelb is Executive Producer. For ***Great Performances***, Bill O'Donnell is Series Producer; David Horn is Executive Producer.

About WNET.ORG

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as *Great Performances*, *Worldfocus*, *Nature*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, *Visions*, *Consuelo Mack WealthTrack*, *Wild Chronicles*, *Miffy and Friends*, and *Cyberchase* to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts, and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America, and the world. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

About the Met

Under the leadership of General Manager Peter Gelb and Music Director James Levine, the Met has a series of bold initiatives underway that are designed to broaden its audience and revitalize the company's repertory. The Met has made a commitment to presenting modern masterpieces alongside the classic repertory, with highly theatrical productions featuring the greatest opera stars in the world.

The Met's 2009-10 season features eight new productions, four of which are Met premieres: Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*, Verdi's *Attila*, Shostakovich's *The Nose*, and Rossini's *Armida*. The other new productions are Puccini's *Tosca*, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Thomas's *Hamlet*.

Building on its 78-year-old international radio broadcast history – heard over the Toll Brothers-Metropolitan Opera International Radio Network – the Met uses advanced media distribution platforms and state-of-the-art technology to reach audiences around the world.

The Emmy and Peabody Award-winning *The Met: Live in HD* series returns for its fourth season in 2009-10 with nine transmissions, beginning October 10 with *Tosca* starring Karita Mattila and ending with *Armida* starring Renée Fleming on May 1. The Met recently introduced *Met Player*, a new subscription service that makes much of its extensive video and audio catalog of full-length performances available to the public for the first time online, and in exceptional, state-of-the-art quality. Metropolitan Opera Radio on SIRIUS XM Radio broadcasts both live and rare historical performances; the *Met on Rhapsody* on-demand service offers audio recordings; and the Met presents free live audio streaming of performances on its website once every week during the opera season with support from RealNetworks®.

The Met has launched several audience development initiatives, including Open House dress rehearsals, a popular rush ticket program, reduced ticket prices, Gallery Met, and an annual Holiday Series presentation for families. For more information, please visit: www.metopera.org.

Broadcast premieres on ***Great Performances at the Met*** are scheduled as follows (Please check local PBS listings):

Wednesday, December 16, 9pm

TOSCA – Karita Mattila, Marcelo Álvarez, and George Gagnidze star in a new production of Puccini's *Tosca* directed by Luc Bondy. Joseph Colaneri conducts.

Wednesday, January 20, 9pm

THE AUDITION – Directed by award-winning filmmaker Susan Froemke, this acclaimed documentary looks at the intense pressures young opera singers face as they struggle to succeed in one of the most difficult professions in the performing arts.

Sunday, January 31, 12pm

AIDA – Violeta Urmana, Dolora Zajick and Johan Botha portray the love triangle at the center of Sonja Frisell's production of Verdi's *Aida*. Daniele Gatti conducts.

Sunday, February 28 at 12pm

TURANDOT – Maria Guleghina sings the title role of Puccini's *Turandot* in Franco Zeffirelli's stunning production. Marina Poplavskaya, Marcello Giordani, and Samuel Ramey also star. Andris Nelsons conducts.

Wednesday, March 24, 9pm

LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN – Tony Award-winning director Bartlett Sher directs Anna Netrebko, Joseph Calleja, and Alan Held in a new production of the Offenbach favorite. Kathleen Kim, Ekaterina Gubanova, and Kate Lindsey round out the cast. James Levine conducts.

Sunday, April 25, 12pm

DER ROSENKAVALIER – **Renée Fleming** and **Susan Graham** star Richard Strauss's popular favorite, also featuring **Eric Cutler**, **Kristinn Sigmundsson**, and **Christine Schäfer**. **Edo de Waart** conducts.

Sunday, May 16, 12pm

CARMEN – **Elīna Garanča** sings the title role opposite **Roberto Alagna** in director **Richard Eyre**'s new production of Bizet's masterpiece. **Barbara Frittoli** is Micaela and **Mariusz Kwiecien** plays the matador Escamillo. **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** conducts.

Sunday, June 20, 12pm

SIMON BOCCANEGRA – **Plácido Domingo** sings the baritone title role of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* for the first time in his Met career, in **Giancarlo del Monaco**'s production. **Adrianne Pieczonka**, **Marcello Giordani**, and **James Morris** star. **James Levine** conducts.

Sunday, July 18, 12pm

HAMLET – **Simon Keenlyside** and **Natalie Dessay** headline the Ambroise Thomas opera based on Shakespeare's play, in a new production directed by **Patrice Caurier** and **Moshe Leiser**. With **Jennifer Larmore**, **Toby Spence**, and **James Morris**. **Louis Langrée** conducts.

Sunday, August 22, 12pm

ARMIDA – **Renée Fleming** plays Rossini's vengeful sorceress in this opera's Met premiere, directed by **Mary Zimmerman**. The cast of multiple tenors includes **Lawrence Brownlee**, **Bruce Ford**, **José Manuel Zapata**, **Barry Banks**, and **Kobie van Rensburg**. **Riccardo Frizza** conducts.