

Malabar Aria

April 2011 Newsletter

Malabar Limited - Costuming Opera Since 1923



Maria Padilla

Many of the operas of the past are rarely if ever performed after their creation but when renowned designer Howard Kaplan told us he was designing Maria Padilla for Opera Boston we gladly offered to assist him in putting the new production together. To create costumes for such a rarity, which may or may not rejoin the repertoire, meant taking into consideration the practicality of these additions to our Opera Department stock. Discussions with the designer helped immeasurably in this. As Howard and I went over his sketches, I was seeing how these clothes could be useful in a variety of plays in the period, or as complements to several opera productions of the period in our stock. In the end the new costumes Howard designed would fulfill the concept of the director and her production team, and become welcome additions to Malabar's 16th century collection. It was a pleasure to work with Howard Kaplan on Maria Padilla and we appreciate the opportunity to showcase our costumes at The Opera America Conference.

Gaetano Donizetti
Opera Boston
Designer: Howard Tsvi Kaplan



Louis Nosko, Opera Department Manager



Designer Notes

By Howard Tsvi Kaplan

It was an honour to have Luigi and his staff build the costumes needed for *Maria Padilla*, which I designed for Opera Boston. The opera is rarely produced and without Malabar it would have been a challenge to find the appropriate costumes.

Stage Director Julia Pevzner and I discussed the opera and agreed we wanted a stiff period silhouette for the Spanish court costumes, which would contrast Maria and her journey in this piece. We decided mid 16th century period; stringent black courtwear – trimmed in gold – with large white collars would contrast Maria, her family and the chorus of shepherds and shepherdesses perfectly.

After researching the costumes needed for this project I met with Opera Department manager Louis Nosko. Together we brainstormed on what could be pulled from stock. A pinch of *Don Carlo*,



Howard Tsvi Kaplan adds a patina to give the chorus costumes age and texture.

a splash of *Falstaff*, a sprinkle of *Maria Stuarda*, a dash of *Gloriana* and we were set to go – now we had a list of the new built costumes.

I went home to sketch the principals and first act chorus and returned to Toronto a few months later to shop for the materials we would need. Irene (fabric buyer) and I scoured Toronto's garment/fabric district for the brocades and trim needed for Maria's five dresses. We also bought the subtle linens, cotton and wool for the Act I peasants, which would be washed and dyed to add age and texture.

Luigi spearheaded all the patterning and cutting for the project – including new leather outfits for several of the principals. Once the costumes are completed and sent to Boston I will give them the final touch: paint, to give them a nice patina.

Thank you, Luigi – and your talented staff – for all the hard work. Productions like these could not be done without your experience, advice and expertise.

See the entire production online at <http://www.malabar.net/operaphotos/maria-padilla>

Die Walküre

Richard Wagner
Hawaii Opera Theater
Designer: Helen E. Rodgers

Designer Notes

By Helen E. Rodgers

As Hawaii Opera prepared for its 2010 season, we were looking to create a new set of costumes for *Die Walküre*. Malabar agreed that this could be a good addition to their stock.

I wanted a clean and stylized look for all of the clothes, without a lot of needless embellishment: simple, clear shapes, strong colors, and details that were both period and modern. For references, I looked at both period research and current fashion magazines in order to create a look that was both contemporary and timeless. References ranged from modern flak vests, the Guardian Angels, and fashion images of biker chic, bondage and Goth, to classic fairy tales and historical figures.

I had many discussions with director Henry Akina about the costumes for *Die Walküre*. We wanted to create very different worlds for the mortals and the gods, worlds that would be felt viscerally as well as be seen by the audience. I decided to do this by playing with the colors and texture choices

for the characters. The gods are all created in cold tones with hard edges and a slicker surface texture: leathers, silver metals worked in brocades and knits, and even serpentine textures. The humans are softer and of “earth” tones: suedes, knits, woolens; browns, greens; with variety by character. Most colors have text references such as Sieglinde’s “spring” colored cloak.

The warrior woman, Brunhilde, and her sisters would need to both speak to the modern audience and to draw references from history. The costume would need to work on a wide variety of sizes and shapes in casting. I flirted with creating a different shape for each Valkyrie. In the end I decided on a uniform look that created an “army” of Valkyries.

Once the costumes were designed, I worked with Luigi and Irene to find the fabrics, and met with Luigi and ladies cutter Lella Arizzi to talk about the cut and details of the garments. We were able to do a lot of this long-distance. I shopped fabrics in New York while Irene scoured the Toronto shops. Luigi built a sample Valkyrie costume and we met to discuss and adjust the proportions on the dress



form in the Malabar costume shop. I had very specific ideas about the cut and line of the garments and we were able to discuss these. The costumes were then completed and shipped to Honolulu the following month. Additional texture and some distressing was added to the mortals once we had them in hand at Hawaii Opera.



Opera Reviews



Die Walküre

“Costumes by Helen E. Rodgers were wonderful and betray the story’s Teutonic origins with some welcome variations. Fricka’s gown possesses a dark, silvery liquefaction redolent of an evil Disney queen. The Valkyries’ oft-mocked metal breastplates and Viking helmets are replaced with silver-studded black leather coats, gloves and boots that would make a dominatrix jealous.”

- Gregg Geary for the Star Bulletin

“HOT’s production was neither old-school staid nor avant-garde bizarre but a delightful reimagining with great singing, creative sets and costumes and smooth staging. . . the gods were quite beyond expectation, in gothic black with silver piping and studs, long leather overcoats.”

- Ruth Bingham for Opera News



Don Giovanni

Designer: Howard Tsvi Kaplan

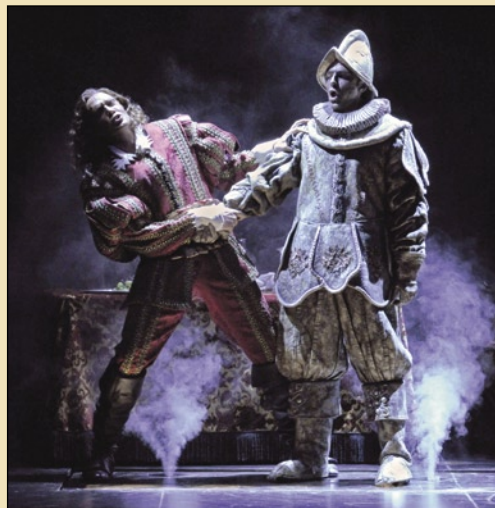
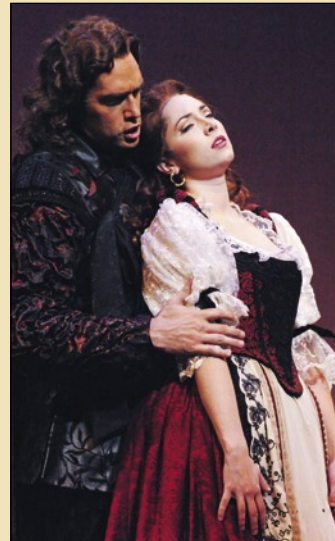
Photos courtesy of Fort Worth Opera

“Costume designer Howard Tsvi Kaplan reached back into the Spanish Renaissance, the time of the Don Juan legend, for the costumes – rather than the late eighteenth-century attire usually presented in productions of Don Giovanni. Colors very effectively further emphasized and distinguished characters, from the mournful solid black worn by Donna Anna and Don Ottavio to the fleshy tones worn by gullible Donna Anna.”

- Waynee Lee Gay for D Magazine

“...historically resonant and regal costumes by Howard Tsvi Kaplan added to the overall allure.”

- Gayle Williams for the Arts Review



Productions with Costumes from Malabar Stock

Amadeus

The Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia is a major regional theater producer in the United States. This past February, Walnut St. Theater came to Malabar to mount their production of *Amadeus*. Here again Malabar, with its combination of period clothing and a staff that knows the play and understands the requirements of the director and actors, can produce a quality period production.



The Inventor

Malabar Ltd is not just a repository for fully-designed intact operas. The complete inventory of costumes is available to create a newly-conceived show.

Such a production was the commissioned premiere of a new opera, *The Inventor*, by Calgary Opera. The designer, Bretta Gerecke, brought her designs and concepts to Malabar to create this new opera out of

existing period costumes. The story had to span several periods and locales. With a knowledgeable staff and a wide inventory of clothes, an opera company is able to create a new opera without having to build it from scratch with the huge cost that would entail. New costumes can also be made to go along with the rest of the clothes. The convenience exists for the designer to know that this type of project can be done in one locale without the need for roping in elements from a wide variety of places.

To quote Tom McCarthy, the production director at Calgary Opera: "It's a big job (no surprise to you, I'm sure!) but things are going very well (all things considered) with the costumes for *The Inventor*. This is, in no small measure, due to your expertise and hard work and that of your wonderful team at Malabar. All of us at Calgary Opera are very, very grateful."



A New Face at Malabar Opera

Carla Kurzenhauser

Customer Services Coordinator

Carla joined Malabar in October 2010. She holds a BS in Clothing Textiles and Design and has worked in the clothing manufacturing industry, as an interior decorator and as a theatrical costumer. Prior to relocating to Toronto she taught art and history in northeast Michigan.



With a lifelong passion for textiles and theatre, Carla feels privileged to be surrounded by master craftsmen, industry

professionals and over 30,000 gorgeous costumes.

Acting as liaison between clients and costumers, Carla gathers front end information and post-production feedback for Malabar's Opera department. Her mandate is to reach out to customers to see what their needs are, and find out how Malabar can better serve those needs.

In today's competitive marketplace, great customer service is absolutely essential and Carla Kurzenhauser is helping Malabar deliver it to you.

Production Staff

Master Tailor & Cutter
Luigi Specia

General Manager
Michelle Poirier

Opera Department Manager
Louis Nosko

Production Secretary
Linda Beggs

Costume Coordinators
Deborah Hoeberg
Wanda Walasinski

Buyer & Production Coordinator
Irene Huzan

Customer Services Coordinator
Carla Kurzenhauser

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