

# Figarosenkavalier

Frustrated wife contending with age? Check. Iconic trouser role of libidinous young buck? Yes. Genius composer at the height of his powers? That too. Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, both opening at the start of the season, have a number of striking connections.



Renée Fleming is renowned for her interpretations of the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* and the Countess in *Figaro*, two women struggling with unhappy marriages and the fading of their youth. The soprano made her Met debut as the Countess, but the Marschallin is her favorite character: "She's endlessly fascinating. And I think I'm performing it now with more strength, less sentimentality, and I think that enables the audience to feel more."

Susan Graham sang Cherubino in *Figaro* in her first Met season and is one of the world's premier interpreters of the role. But she has never done the opera at the Met with long-time collaborator Fleming. In *Rosenkavalier*, though, Graham has been the Octavian to Fleming's Marschallin ten times with the company.



While Strauss was working on the final duet between Octavian and Sophie, he wrote to Hofmannsthal, "I was extremely tied down by the verse-scheme you gave me, but I really am quite sympathetic toward such constraint for a melody, because I see in it something Mozartian."

Maestro James Levine has conducted 67 Met performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and 49 *Rosenkavaliers*. His 50th will be the season premiere on October 13.

AFTER ROSENKAVALIER'S PREMIERE IN 1911, A CRITIC DECLARED, "NOT SINCE LE NOZZE DI FIGARO HAS A COMIC OPERA LIKE THIS ONE BEEN CREATED."

When Danielle de Niese made her Met debut as Barbarina in *Figaro*, her Countess was Renée Fleming. This season, de Niese sings the role of Susanna.



*Figaro* was Mozart's first collaboration with Lorenzo Da Ponte, who also wrote the text for *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal also established a fruitful working relationship, collaborating on six operas (*Rosenkavalier* was the second).

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