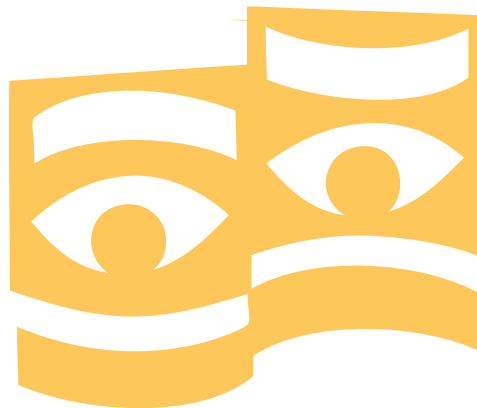


GOTHAM

chamber opera



BEHIND THE CURTAIN
FALL 2010

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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Best "off-Broadway" opera production 2010 *Parterre Box* – May 20, 2010

GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

At the Summer 2005 Lincoln Center Festival, Gotham's production of Respighi's *La bella dormente nel bosco* (*Sleeping Beauty*) delightfully animated the composer's lush harmonies with the magical puppetry of Basil Twist. Those of you who fondly remember this spectacle will be especially excited by our Fall 2010 production: Xavier Montsalvatge's *El gato con botas* (*Puss in Boots*). For this fairy-tale set by another mid-twentieth century composer, we will again employ puppets –this time under the direction of Moisés Kaufman. Undoubtedly the same magic will ensue.

Both the Respighi and the Montsalvatge are typical for us: Gotham Chamber Opera specializes in ambitious productions of often un-heralded repertory. Witness our recent presentation of Haydn's *Il mondo della luna* (*The World on the Moon*) at the Hayden Planetarium under the direction of Diane Paulus: here too, Gotham challenged all preconceptions of what, where, and how opera can be performed. The result was pure magic.

None of these productions would be possible without your loyal and generous support. Gotham truly is a puppet animated by your helpful hidden hands. With this newsletter we want to keep you posted on the company's plans – and to inspire you to continue to "pull the strings".

Thank you for your support!

TED TRUSSELL PORTER

El gato con botas

From October 1 to 10, Gotham Chamber Opera and Tectonic Theater Project will join forces to present the United States premiere of Xavier Montsalvatge's *El gato con botas* (*Puss in Boots*). As a presentation of the New Victory Theater at 209 West 42nd St., our production will be directed by Moisés Kaufman (Broadway's *33 Variations*, *The Laramie Project*, *I Am My Own Wife*), and will feature feature bunraku puppetry, designed and executed by London's renowned Blind Summit Theatre Company. Blind Summit is best known to New York City audiences for their work in the Metropolitan Opera's recent production of *Madama Butterfly*. The production's sets will be designed by Andromache Chalfant, with costumes by Clint Ramos.

Born in Girona, Spain, Xavier Montsalvatge (1912-2002) is one of the most renowned



Set Model by Andromache Chalfant

composers of Spain's so-called "lost generation," existing between the composers of the Republic and the current generation of Spanish composers. Of his three operas, *El gato con botas* (1946), *Una voce in off* (1962) and *Babel 46* (1967), *El gato con botas* is the most famous, based on the familiar Perrault fairy tale.

The opening night gala performance and reception for *El gato con botas* will take place on October 1 at 7:00 pm. As in the past, the performance will be immediately followed by a festive reception at a nearby location. Tickets are \$500 (\$400 tax deductible), \$1,000 (\$850 tax-deductible), and \$2,500 (\$2,200 tax-deductible) and will be available in July on our website or by calling 212-868-4460.

Additional performances are October 2, 7, 8, and 9 at 7 pm; October 2 and 9 at 2 pm; and October 3 and 10 at 12 pm and 5 pm. Prices range from \$9–\$25 for Members, and \$14–\$38 for Non-Members.

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As most of you know, we've just concluded what was perhaps our most ambitious production, Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*, which played to sold-out houses at the Hayden Planetarium and garnered immense critical acclaim. But what you may not know is that our budget has doubled in size since 2005. Yet we've been able to balance the budget, even in the midst of the current economic difficulties, through the tremendous support of our loyal fans like you. Because of your generosity, we approach our tenth anniversary in 2011–2012 in strong financial and artistic health.

With that good news in mind, we're happy to report that this year we return to a two-production season. From October 1–October 10, we will bring you the United States premiere of Montsalvatge's delightful opera *El gato con botas* (*Puss in Boots*). Presented at the beautiful 500-seat New Victory Theater, our production will alternate performances in Spanish and English, and at a running time of 70 minutes, it is guaranteed to be a treat for audiences of all ages.

In February, we will bring you our second production, the United States professional stage premiere of Cavalli's recently discovered baroque masterpiece *Eligabalo*. We will have much information about this exciting production and next seasons' tenth anniversary celebration to share with you in our fall newsletter.

For those of you who have recently supported our work with a donation, we offer our sincere thanks. If you haven't recently made a contribution to

Gotham Chamber Opera, we would be most grateful for your support now.

You can make a contribution on our website at <http://www.gothamchamberopera.com/support.html> or by using the mail-in form on the back of this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you at *El gato con botas* in October!

Sincerely,

DAVID BENNETT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NOTES FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In the summer of 2005, Gotham Chamber Opera presented Respighi's *La bella dormiente nel bosco* (*Sleeping Beauty*) at Lincoln Center



Festival and Spoleto Festival USA. The production was a great success with the general public as well as with critics due to its magical score and the magic of its puppetry. I immediately sought another work that might provide the same sense of wonderment to our audiences. But such a work was not so easy to locate.

Eventually I remembered that, many years ago, I had played the accompaniment to some piquant songs entitled *Cinco canciones negras* by the Catalan composer Xavier Montsalvatge. Somewhere in my memory bank I recalled that Montsalvatge had also written a fairy tale opera of some sort. After a bit of research I unearthed *El gato con botas* (*Puss in Boots*), and it proved to be a real find. The extrovert score exudes joy at every turn. Like the Respighi, *El gato con botas* features a simple, shining surface that belies great musical complexity, resulting in an opera that can please children, sophisticated musicians, and everyone in between. To elicit and enhance those qualities, I turned to the acclaimed director Moisés Kaufman (*33 Variations* and *I Am My Own Wife* on Broadway) and the internationally renowned Blind Summit Puppet Theater (the Met's *Madama Butterfly*). Together, they are creating what I feel will be another (sometimes literally) magical evening of opera.

I am particularly pleased to offer *El gato con botas* on the heels of Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*, which we presented in January at the Hayden Planetarium of the American Museum of Natural History. That production,



with its celestial light show and laser technology, represented a level of modern stagecraft that would be hard to top. With *El gato con botas* we don't try; in fact, we are aiming in the opposite direction. Puppetry is a low-tech art form that derives its power from the simplest means, and much of our pleasure derives from watching beautiful hand-made objects manipulated by real people. Classical music is also a celebration of the low-tech, featuring much the same ingredients: hand-made objects manipulated by real people. And singing is perhaps the lowest-tech of all, involving nothing man-made whatsoever. It requires only two things: the singer and the listener.

That's where you come in-literally. Please help us bring more magic to life when we combine two low-tech art forms into one high-octane experience with *El gato con botas* this fall.

NEAL GOREN

ABOUT OUR STAGE DIRECTOR

MOISÉS KAUFMAN the founder and artistic director of the New York-based Tectonic Theater Project and the writer/director of *Gross Indecency*:

The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde, *The Laramie Project*, and *33 Variations* among many other acclaimed productions, will be directing his first opera when he joins Gotham Chamber Opera for its fall 2010 American premiere presentation of Xavier Montsalvatge's *El gato con botas*. He brings to this exciting new venture a passion for theater and music reaching back to his boyhood in Caracas, Venezuela, where he was born and raised. As a youth, he was introduced to the work of some of the world's leading and most innovative theater directors at a prestigious drama festival held annually in Caracas. He also received an early introduction to the pleasures of opera at a Metropolitan Opera performance of *Carmen* during a visit to New York when



© Joan Marcus

he was eight.

he was eight.

His Tectonic Theater Project, established in 1991, is dedicated to exploring the unique language and forms of theater as they differ from film or television, and he is eager to bring the innovative, experimental approach developed by that company to the world of opera and, in particular, to Montsalvatge's charming version of a classic fable. He is especially pleased to be collaborating with Gotham Chamber Opera and a third company also noted for its adventurous offerings, Blind Summit Theater, renowned for its puppetry, who contributed significantly to the success of the Metropolitan Opera's recent new production of *Madama Butterfly*.

Mr. Kaufman looks forward to exploring the power and appeal which the fable of *Puss and the Boots* has exerted over the centuries in various forms, languages, and cultures. This operatic version, with its colorful, arresting arias, ensembles, and dances, will be performed in both its original Spanish and in an excellent English translation, and it will delight and enthrall adults and children equally. In choosing casts who will perform in both languages, Mr. Kaufman hoped to find performers who matched the work's challenging vocal requirements with acting skills that could encompass both dramatic and comedic opportunities, and he feels that he and conductor Neal Goren have discovered ideal exponents for these demanding roles. In addition, Blind Summit's puppets will both flesh out the array of animals who make up this unusual cast and also occasionally mirror the action of the principle characters.

For Mr. Kaufman, *El gato con botas*, which vividly demonstrates how wit and imagination can enable us to overcome great loss and personal difficulties, promises to be an entrancing and moving time in the theater for all members of the family, as well as an introduction to a neglected and irresistible addition to the operatic repertory.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

XAVIER MONTSALVATGE, the distinguished Spanish composer, critic, and teacher, was born in 1912 in Catalonia, a region whose history and cultural heritage were central to his work throughout his long life. Soon after moving to Barcelona, at the age of nine, he began to study the violin and eventually attended the Barcelona Conservatory, where an early composition was awarded the school's most coveted prize.

From the beginning Montsalvatge was particularly conscious of rhythm and the role of music in the theater. Inevitably drawn to

dance, he established himself as one of his country's outstanding young composers, with more than twenty ballets to his credit. In 1942 he began a second career as a music critic and, twenty years later, a third as a teacher at the Conservatory. In all of these pursuits Montsalvatge was influential in encouraging Catalan music to move away from its Germanic traditions and to absorb the innovations of Stravinsky and the composers comprising France's *Les Six*. His delight in the world of children and the folk music of his native Catalonia can perhaps best be enjoyed in his opera *El gato con botas*, which received its premiere in 1948 in Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu. He was also fascinated by West Indian music and its Spanish origins, which are evident in such popular works as his song cycle *Cançons negres* from the 1940s.

Montsalvatge's later work included film scores, concertos for the violin and piano, and in 1962 an opera set to an Italian text. Drawn to the great European nationalist composers, but always attracted by the vanguard, Montsalvatge adopted an eclectic posture which enabled him to write scores that were acclaimed for their individuality, maturity, and high quality. He died in his beloved Barcelona in 2002 at the age of 90.

ADDITIONAL LISTENING FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

For those interested in exploring more of Montsalvatge's output, I would begin with his most famous work, the *Cinco cançons negres* for mezzo soprano and piano. There is a terrific recording, readily available, by Joyce DiDonato and Julian Drake on their recording entitled *Pasión!*. Teresa Berganza and Felix Labilla also made a fine recording of the songs for DGG in 1975, though it will take perseverance to locate a copy.

El gato con botas is Montsalvatge's second best-known work. Conductor Antoni Ros-Marbá leads a somewhat uneven cast and the excellent Orquestra Sinfónica del Gran Teatre del Liceu in a 2006 recording that fully captures the spirit of the work. The same conductor and orchestra recorded Montsalvatge's second opera, *Una voce in off*, in 1962. Composed to an Italian libretto, the opera sounds post-Puccinian—think Menotti with a Spanish twist—and merits performance. Montsalvatge's third and final opera, *Babel-1948*, has not been recorded, so far as I can tell.

Montsalvatge wrote some lovely piano music, most notably *Sonatine pour Yvette* (whose last movement incorporates *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*), eloquently recorded by the late Alicia de Larrocha. De Larrocha also recorded his very French-sounding *Concierto breve*. I am also partial to *Elegía a Maurice Ravel*, the second of the *Tres divertimentos*, and to *Divagación*. Some may find his suite *El arca de Noé* (Noah's Ark) interesting as well.

Montsalvatge was a master of orchestral coloration. His *Sinfonía Mediterránea* is celebrated, but I find the three-movement *Laberinto* even more appealing.

Montsalvatge embraced many styles over the course of his long career (even 12-tone composition), but I find none of his works more appealing than *El gato con botas*. In that work he brought the full force of wit, charm, humor, and craftsmanship to bear.

NEAL GOREN

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

What do you most enjoy about Gotham Chamber Opera?

Please let us know at:

gothamallure@gothamchamberopera.org

Your responses will help us plan future seasons. We will report your responses in our autumn newsletter.

HAYDN

AT THE HAYDEN

an out-of-this-world hit

In January, Gotham Chamber Opera, in an extraordinary collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History, presented five sold-out performances of Haydn's *Il mondo della luna* (*The World on the Moon*). Here's what the critics had to say:

"Consider it must-see opera. Trimmed to 100 minutes sans intermission, the intimate setting, which utilizes a 180-degree dome and gorgeous light projections, fuses opera and stargazing in a night to remember."

—Fern Siegel, *The Huffington Post*, January 21, 2010

"A delightful sound and light show, with projections both astronomical and fantastical exploding on the spherical ceiling overhead." —Mike Silverman, *Associated Press*, January 20, 2010

"Haydn's music is not just witty but also elaborate, rich and tender, qualities Mr. Goren captured in his conducting." —Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, January 20, 2010

"Director Diane Paulus, who helmed the hit revival of *Hair*, takes her cue from the hallucinogenic potion given to Buonafede, evoking the fake moonscape as a '60s disco complete with glittery mimes, luminescent costumes and trippy projections on the planetarium dome." —James Jorden, *New York Post*, January 20, 2010

You can read more of the rave reviews here:

http://www.gothamchamberopera.org/news_ilmondo.html.

The singers for *Il mondo* have been flying high since our performances.

UPDATE ON OUR HAYDN CAST



HANAN ALATTAR

recently appeared in recital in Sarasota and in the American Symphony Orchestra's presentation of Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* in

Avery Fisher Hall. This summer she returns to English National Opera as Leila in *Les pêcheurs de perles*, and next season she makes her debut with Seattle Opera as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*.



ALBINA SHAGIMUTOVA

flew to Moscow to sing Queen of the Night at the Bolshoi Opera, then returned to New York for her Metropolitan Opera debut in the same role

in April. In between, she made her debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Rossini's *Stabat Mater*.



NICHOLAS COPPOLO

sang the role of Emilio in Handel's *Partenope* at New York City Opera in April and Icarus in the world premiere of Daron Hagen's *Amelia* with Seattle Opera in May.



In the fall, TIMOTHY KUHN

performs the role of Marcello in *La bohème* with Atlanta Opera followed by Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with Virginia Opera.



MARCO NISTICÒ

flew directly from our production to Sarasota Opera to sing Giacomo in Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco*, followed by Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore* with Toledo Opera. Next fall he returns to New York City Opera to sing Dulcamara, which is rapidly becoming one of his signature roles.





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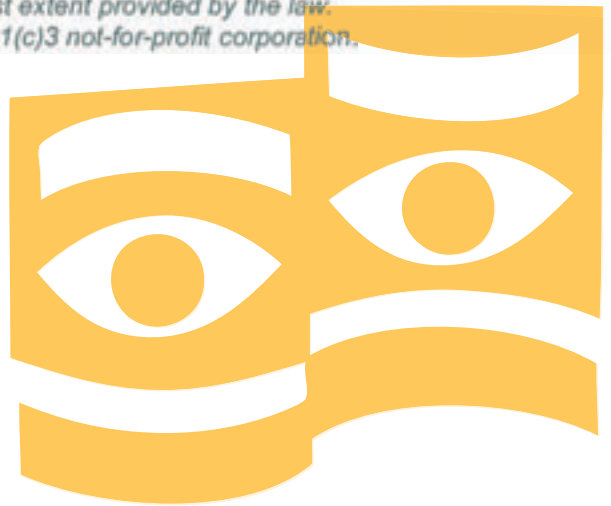
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