

PITTSBURGH OPERA

For Immediate Release

September 2, 2009

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Pittsburgh Opera Presents Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*

A grand treatment of a love story that could never be

What: Tchaikovsky's opera [Eugene Onegin](#)

Where: Benedum Center for the Performing Arts
[7th Street and Penn Avenue](#), Downtown Pittsburgh

When: Saturday, September 26, 6:00 PM Tuesday, September 29, 7:00 PM
Friday, October 2, 8:00 PM Sunday, October 4, 2:00 PM

Run Time: 3 hours and 15 minutes, including one intermission

Language: Sung in Russian with English titles projected above the stage

Tickets: Start at \$10. Call 412-456-6666 for more information
or visit www.pittsburghopera.org

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Pittsburgh, PA... [Pittsburgh Opera](#) presents Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's [Eugene Onegin](#) at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts September 26 – October 4, 2009. This tragic masterpiece inspired by Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse of the same name, is a grand treatment of a love story that could never be – the soulful country girl Tatiana and the nobleman Eugene Onegin in Czarist Russia. Such a tragedy is rarely so elegant. The lush melodies, beautiful dancing, rich orchestrations and magnificent set make this the season opener not to miss!

The story begins on the country estate of the widowed Madame Larina when the peasants return from the fields celebrating the harvest with song and dance. Lensky, the suitor for Madame Larina's youngest daughter Olga, arrives on the estate with his friend Eugene Onegin and declares his love for Olga. Onegin strolls through the garden with Madame Larina's elder daughter Tatiana. Charmed by the dashing nobleman, Tatiana falls madly in love with Onegin.

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In her bedroom that evening, Tatiana sits up writing a passionate love letter to Onegin and then gives the letter to her nurse Filipyevna to be delivered to Onegin. Onegin coldly rejects Tatiana, leaving her embarrassed and devastated.

Some months later, at a party for Tatiana's name day, Onegin dances with her sister Olga, inciting Lensky's jealousy. Lensky confronts Onegin and accuses him of flirting with Olga. Madame Larina begs the men not to quarrel in her house, but Lensky cannot be calmed and challenges Onegin to a duel. When the time comes for the duel, both men's heads have cleared and neither wants to continue, but honor must be satisfied. The duel is marked off, paces taken, a shot fired. Onegin kills Lensky.

Several years later, at a ball in Prince Gremin's Palace in St. Petersburg, Onegin is reflecting bitterly on his life's travels leading him back to another dull social event when suddenly he recognizes Tatiana across the ballroom, dressed in a beautiful gown, bearing herself with great dignity. Onegin learns Tatiana is now Gremin's wife. Gremin cares deeply for Tatiana and describes her as his life's salvation. When Gremin introduces Onegin, Tatiana maintains her composure but excuses herself after a few words of polite conversation. In those brief moments, Onegin realizes he is in love with Tatiana.

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The following day, Onegin sends an impassioned letter to Tatiana, confessing his love for her. When he goes to Tatiana, Onegin falls at her feet professing his love for her. Faltering for a moment, Tatiana admits she still loves him, but maintains her control and resolves not to leave her husband. Tatiana leaves Onegin bitterly regretting his destiny.

Eugene Onegin opens Saturday, September 26 and continues September 29 and October 2, 4, 2009. For tickets starting at just \$10, call 412-456-6666 or visit www.pittsburghopera.org.

This production is generously sponsored by [H.J. Heinz Company Foundation](#).

The Pittsburgh Opera 2009-2010 season is generously sponsored by [PNC Foundation](#).

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Facts About The Opera and Composer

- *Eugene Onegin* (Russian: *Евгений Онегин*, *Yevgény Onégin*) is an opera in 3 acts by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.
- Tchaikovsky, a Russian composer of the Romantic era, was born to a middle-class family in the Ural Mountains on May 7, 1840. He is best known for the ballets *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, the *1812 Overture*, his First Piano Concerto, several symphonies and the operas *Eugene Onegin* and *Queen of Spades*.
- The libretto for *Eugene Onegin*, written by Konstantin Shilovsky and adapted by the composer, is based on the novel in verse of the same name by Alexander Pushkin.
- Tchaikovsky began composing *Eugene Onegin* in May 1877 and completed the work in January 1878.
- *Eugene Onegin* is episodic, composed of selected highlights from Onegin's life. Since the original story was so well known, Tchaikovsky expected his audience to fill in any details he omitted. A similar treatment is found in Puccini's *La bohème*.
- *Eugene Onegin* was first performed by the students of the Moscow Conservatory on March 29, 1879 at the Maly Theatre in Moscow. Nikolai Rubinstein conducted with set designs by Karl Valts.
- The first performance of *Eugene Onegin* outside Russia took place in Prague on December 6, 1888 and was conducted by Tchaikovsky himself. It was sung in Czech and translated by Marie Červinková-Riegrová.
- The duel between Lensky and Onegin is a significant event in both Pushkin's novel and Tchaikovsky's opera. Ironically, Pushkin himself was killed in a duel, fighting a man who was romancing his wife. For centuries dueling was considered to be an honorable and civilized way to settle disagreements.
- Pittsburgh Opera previously performed *Eugene Onegin* in April 1941 and April 1991. In the 1991 production, Pittsburgher Raymond Very, who is performing the role of Lensky in the current production, was a member the chorus.

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Cast and Artistic Team

Cast in order of vocal appearance

Tatiana	Anna Samuil ⁺	soprano
Olga	Lindsay Ammann ^{+*}	mezzo-soprano
Madame Larina	Susanne Mentzer	mezzo-soprano
Filipyevna	Susan Shafer	mezzo-soprano
Vladimir Lensky	Raymond Very	tenor
Eugene Onegin	Dwayne Croft ⁺	baritone
Monsieur Triquet	Joseph Frank	tenor
Zaretsky	Liam Moran [*]	bass
Prince Gremin	Oren Gradus ^{**}	bass

+ Pittsburgh Opera debut

* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumni

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The internationally renowned Russian-born Anna Samuil makes her Pittsburgh Opera debut as the beautiful and tragic Tatiana. Ms. Samuil debuted the role at Salzburg Festival in 2007 to rave reviews. In addition to performances around the world, she frequently performs at the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin where her roles include Violetta in *La traviata*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Adina in *The Elixir of Love*, Musetta in *La bohème*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Alice Ford in *Falstaff* and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*.

Also in his Pittsburgh Opera debut, American baritone Dwayne Croft performs his signature role as the emotionally unavailable Eugene Onegin. A well-known artist around the world and a favorite of Metropolitan Opera audiences, he has appeared in more than 350 performances of 27 roles at the Metropolitan Opera including performances of the title roles in *Eugene Onegin*, *Billy Budd*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Barber of Seville*, as well as Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Giorgio Germont in *La traviata*, Ford in *Falstaff*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Valentin in *Faust*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, Marcello in *La bohème* and created the role of Nick Carraway in the world premiere of John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*.

Returning to Pittsburgh Opera as the doomed Lensky is American tenor and Pittsburgher Raymond Very. Mr. Very previously performed with Pittsburgh Opera as Yamadori in the 1993 production of *Madame Butterfly* and as the Steersman in the 1992 production of *Tristan & Isolde*. He is hailed around the world for his performances as the title characters

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in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *The Rake's Progress*, *The Student Prince* and *Damnation of Faust* as well as Don Jose in *Carmen*, Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Alfredo in *La traviata*, Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*, Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* and Cassio in *Otello*.

American mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer made her Pittsburgh Opera debut in 2005 as the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and returns for this production to perform the role of Madame Larina. A specialist in trouser roles, Ms. Mentzer is most noted for her portrayals of Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*. She is also noted for her bel canto style in performances of Romeo in *The Capulets and the Montagues*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Jane Seymour in *Anna Bolena* and the title role in *La Cenerentola*.

Pittsburgh favorite, American mezzo-soprano Susan Shafer returns as Nurse Filipyevna. Ms. Shafer has performed with Pittsburgh Opera as Ulrica in *The Masked Ball*, Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*, Mary in *Flying Dutchman* and Marthe in *Faust*. She is also known around the world for her performances as Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Klytemnestra in *Elektra*, Erda in *Das Rheingold*, the Nurse in *Boris Godunov*, Mary in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Eboli in *Don Carlo*, Genevieve in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Herodias in *Salome*, Gertrude in *Romeo et Juliette* and Katisha in *The Mikado*.

Another familiar face, dating back to his 1979 Pittsburgh Opera debut as Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus*, American tenor Joseph Frank returns to Pittsburgh as the Frenchman Monsieur Triquet. Mr. Frank has performed in 11 Pittsburgh Opera productions, most recently as Granpa in the world premiere of the revised version of *The Grapes of Wrath*. With a career spanning over 35 years, he has specialized in the lyric character tenor repertoire and has won acclaim in over 80 roles. Appearing in major opera houses around the world, Mr. Frank's recent appearances include *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Tosca*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Turandot*, *Boris Godunov*, *La Fanciulla del West* and the Los Angeles Opera's world premiere of *Nicholas and Alexandra*.

Performing the role of Prince Gremin is bass Oren Gradus, an alumnus of the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program. He made his Pittsburgh Opera debut as the Duke in *Romeo & Juliet* in March 1998 and has since performed as the Commissioner in *Madame Butterfly*, Count Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, Schmidt in *Andrea Chenier*, Colline in *La bohème* and most recently as Mephistopheles in *Faust*. He will also perform the role of Figaro in Pittsburgh Opera's 2010 production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mr. Gradus made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 2002 and his roles there include Garibaldo in *Rodelinda*, Giorgio in *I Puritani*, Timur in *Turandot*, and Colline in *La bohème*. Some of his other roles include

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Ulysses S. Grant in Thomson's *The Mother of Us All*, Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* and Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*.

Rounding out this stunning cast are Pittsburgh Opera's Resident Artists mezzo-soprano Lindsay Ammann and bass Liam Moran. Ms. Ammann makes her Pittsburgh Opera debut as Olga and will subsequently be seen in the 2009-2010 season as Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*, Lucretia in *The Rape of Lucretia* and Marcellina in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mr. Moran returns for his third season with Pittsburgh Opera, most recently performing as Colline in *La bohème*. He has also performed as Capellio in *The Capulets & the Montagues*, the Old Hebrew in *Samson & Dalila*, the King in *Aida* and the title role in *Don Pasquale*. This season, Mr. Moran will also perform the roles of Collatinus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Zuniga in *Carmen* and Antonio in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Attack Theatre's Michele de la Reza and Peter Kope return to choreograph the dance sequences for the opera. Ms. de la Reza began teaching movement classes to the Resident Artists of Pittsburgh Opera in 1995 and later, with Mr. Kope, choreographed and provided dancers for the 1999 production of *Rigoletto*. More recently Attack Theatre has danced in the 2007 production of *Aida*, the 2008 production of *Samson & Dalila* and is also engaged for the 2010 production of *Carmen*.

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California native Sam Helfrich returns to direct, having most recently worked with Pittsburgh Opera on the 2005 production of *The Turn of the Screw*. In addition to forming his own theatre company in 2002, Captains of Industry, to produce *Transparency of Val* by Stephen Belber, Mr. Helfrich's directorial credits include the new opera by Richard Owen, *Rain*; *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*; *Don Giovanni*; *West Side Story*; *The Abduction from the Seraglio*; *The Barber of Seville*; *Agrippina*; *The Elixir of Love* and recently with Glimmerglass Opera, *La Voix Humaine* and *The Consul*.

Australian-born Pittsburgh Opera Music Director Antony Walker will conduct, completing this international star-studded ensemble. Since his conducting debut in 1991, Maestro Walker has led companies in Europe, the United States and Australia and is currently in his fourth season as Pittsburgh Opera's Music Director. At the young age of 22, he became musical director of the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and currently, in addition to his post as Music Director for Pittsburgh Opera, holds the positions of the Artistic Director for Washington Concert Opera, Music Director and founder of Cantillation, Orchestra of the Antipodes & Sinfonia Australis and co-Artistic Director for Pinchgut Opera. Recent productions in the Maestro's extensive repertoire includes the North American premiere of Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale* and the US premiere of Petitgirard's *The Elephant Man*, as well as Puccini's *La bohème*, Mercadante's *Il Giuramento*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Saint-Saëns's *Samson & Dalila*, Verdi's *Aida* and Bellini's *The Capulets and the Montagues*.

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Conductor	Antony Walker
Stage Director	Sam Helfrich
Set Designer	Neil Patel
Costume Designer	Isabella Bywater
Lighting Designer	Stevie Agnew
Choreographers	Michele de la Reza and Peter Kope, Attack Theatre
Hair & Makeup Designer	James Geier
Assistant Conductor	Glenn Lewis
Chorus Master	Mark Trawka
Accompanist	James Lesniak
Stage Manager	E. Reed Fisher
Assistant Stage Director	David Shouse +

Sets from Vancouver Opera

Costumes from Santa Fe Opera and Seattle Opera

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- + Pittsburgh Opera debut
- * Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist
- ** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumni

Tickets and Group Discounts

Pittsburgh Opera strives to make opera intellectually and financially accessible to a diverse audience and this season is proud to announce [single tickets](#) starting at just \$10.

In addition to reduced [single tickets](#), the Opera has a wide range of [season subscriptions](#) options, starting at just \$21!

Subscribers enjoy the benefits of:

- The best seats at the best prices
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The Opera is also offering a money-back guarantee for subscribers – if they are not delighted with their first opera, Pittsburgh Opera will refund the balance of the subscription.

For tickets, call (412) 456-6666 or visit www.pittsburghopera.org.

Finally, Pittsburgh Opera is committed to making opera accessible to all groups in the

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Pittsburgh area by providing great discounts and special services to group ticketholders. Unlike the large number of people required by many other organizations, a group at Pittsburgh Opera can be as few as 6 people!

For more information about group ticket services and discounts, contact Randy Adams at (412) 281-0912 ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org.

Related Events

The Diamond Horseshoe Ball

Saturday, September 26, 2009 – 4:30 PM

The annual [Diamond Horseshoe Ball](#) is a Pittsburgh Opera signature event kicking off the season in grand style. Guests will enjoy an evening of dinner, dancing, cocktails and of course opera! Each year, one lucky guest is selected at random to receive a diamond-encrusted pendant in the shape of a horseshoe to commemorate the evening.

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The 55th annual Diamond Horseshoe Ball will be an evening of czarist Russian glamour beginning with a lively reception of light hors d'oeuvres, "bubbly" and special entertainment in the newly renovated EQT Plaza. From the plaza, guests will walk a Hollywood-style red carpet to the Benedum Center for the opening night of Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*. Following the performance, guests will gather in the Westin Hotel Ballroom to dine on Russian-inspired delectables and dance the night away.

Cocktails – 4:30 PM

Eugene Onegin* – 6:00 PM

Dinner and Dancing – Immediately following the opera

Tickets are \$350 - \$500 per person. The Diamond Horseshoe Ball is presented by the Pittsburgh Opera Association – an auxiliary group whose purpose is to promote an active interest in opera in Pittsburgh and to help financially support Pittsburgh Opera. All proceeds benefit Pittsburgh Opera.

For additional information or to purchase tickets for The Diamond Horseshoe Ball online, visit www.pittsburghopera.org. To purchase tickets by phone, call (412) 281-0912 ext. 216.

** Please note that performance tickets are the responsibility of each guest. To purchase performance tickets call 412-456-6666 or visit www.pittsburghopera.org.*

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Eugene Onegin Previews on WQED-FM 89.3

Saturday, September 19 – 1:30 PM

Friday, September 25 – 7:00 PM

Hosted by WQED's Steven Baum, the *Eugene Onegin* preview will give listeners an in-depth introduction to the singers, music and production of the opera. For more information, call (412) 281-0912 or visit www.pittsburghopera.org.

Susanne Mentzer Recital

Sunday, September 13, 2009 – 5:00 PM

Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters ([2425 Liberty Avenue](http://www.pittsburghopera.org))

Pittsburgh Opera is proud to host an evening with Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer. On Sunday, September 13, guests will enjoy a cocktail reception, an intimate concert by Ms. Mentzer accompanied by Pittsburgh Opera Head of Music Glenn Lewis and a dinner in Pittsburgh Opera's performance space in its new headquarters (2425 Liberty Avenue), in the Strip District.

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The September 13 event will begin with a cocktail reception at 5:00 PM, followed by the recital at 6:00 PM and a dinner at 7:00 PM. Tickets are \$100 per person with all proceeds benefiting Pittsburgh Opera.

Reservations are required by September 8. To make a reservation, contact Edward Roberts at (412) 281-0912 ext. 225 or eroberts@pittsburghopera.org.

Opera Up Close: Eugene Onegin

Sunday, September 20, 2009 – 2:00 PM

Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters ([2425 Liberty Avenue](http://www.pittsburghopera.org))

Opera Up Close: Eugene Onegin is an entertaining and insightful program held on Sunday, September 20, in the performance space of Pittsburgh Opera's headquarters (2425 Liberty Avenue) in the Strip. *Opera Up Close* begins with an in-depth musical analysis of the opera *Eugene Onegin* with [Maestro Antony Walker](http://www.pittsburghopera.org). Attendees will be informed and entertained as the Maestro plays the piano, sings a few lines and tells anecdotes.

After a short intermission where guests can enjoy light hospitality and chat with the Maestro, a moderated discussion panel will conclude the afternoon's events. The panel, which includes the director and star performers, will give guests an up-close and intimate behind-the-scenes peek into the world of opera ranging from deep, insightful analysis of each character to the light-hearted comic stories of their personal experiences. There will be opportunities to ask questions of the panel and meet the artists afterward.

Opera Up Close is free and open to the public. For more information, call (412) 281-0912 or visit www.pittsburghopera.org.

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Susanne Mentzer Master Class

Thursday, October 1, 2009 – 7:00 PM

Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters ([2425 Liberty Avenue](#))

Expert instruction is an integral part of the training Resident Artists receive as part of the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program. While most instruction is given in private, Pittsburgh Opera hosts public [Master Classes](#) throughout the season to give the community an opportunity to enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at the instruction of the Resident Artists.

Internationally acclaimed American mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer will host a Master Class with Pittsburgh Opera's Resident Artists on Thursday, October 1 at 7:00 PM in the company's new headquarters in the Strip District.

Free and open to the public, observers will have the opportunity to enjoy Ms. Mentzer's expert instruction of the Resident Artists, with musical and dramatic critiques of their singing. For more information or to reserve a seat, call (412) 281-0912.

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OPERAEncore

Friday, October 2, 2009 – 8:00 PM

Benedum Center

OPERAEncore (formerly *Opera Straight Up*) is a unique opportunity for Pittsburghers in their 20s to 40s who enjoy the arts, new experiences, networking, socializing and downtown nightlife. For only \$35 per person, **OPERA**Encore attendees will enjoy Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in some of the best seats in the Benedum Center, worth around \$100 each, and an afterparty immediately following the opera – all for only \$35.

Operagoers who already have tickets for the performance can join us for the afterparty for just \$15 at the door. For more information or to purchase tickets, call (412) 281-0912 ext. 216 or email tickets@pittsburghopera.org.

Pre-Opera Talk

Ticketholders are invited to attend a [Pre-Opera Talk](#) on *Eugene Onegin* one hour before each performance's curtain in the Main Floor/Orchestra section of the Benedum Center. Learn about the composer, the story and some juicy details about the opera! These talks are free to all ticketholders.

Meet the Artists

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

Immediately following the opera in the Benedum Lower Lobby

Ticketholders for the Tuesday, September 29 performance of *Eugene Onegin* are invited to join Pittsburgh Opera in the Lower Lobby of the Benedum Center immediately following the

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performance for light refreshments and interviews with [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) and the stars of the opera. This event is free to all Tuesday performance ticketholders.

Brown Bag Concert Series

Saturday, September 12 – 12:00 PM

Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters ([2425 Liberty Avenue](#))

The Saturday, September 12 concert will open another season of the popular and free concert [Brown Bag Concert Series](#). Beginning at 12:00 PM, this one-hour performance will feature a preview of *Eugene Onegin* by the 2009-2010 Resident Artists, in the cozy new performance space at Pittsburgh Opera's headquarters (2425 Liberty Avenue) in the Strip District. Friends, families and Pittsburghers of all ages are invited to come enjoy an intimate concert of some of opera's most popular arias as well as a mix of Broadway, musical theater and other surprises. This is a wonderful opportunity for an informal introduction to opera and guests can even meet the performers after the show!

Guests are encouraged to bring a lunch or pre-order a gourmet boxed lunch from [Right By Nature Natural Foods Market](#), Pittsburgh Opera's Local and Sustainable Food and Beverage Sponsor. Gourmet lunches start at \$9 for adults and \$5 for children. Ingredients are local, organic and sustainable. A boxed [lunch menu](#) can be found in the [Community](#) section of the Pittsburgh Opera website, www.pittsburghopera.org. To pre-order a boxed lunch, call (412) 454-6200.

Additional Brown Bag Concert Dates:

Saturday, October 10

Saturday, November 14

Saturday, December 12

Saturday, January 9

Saturday, February 13

Saturday, March 13

Saturday, April 10

*[Pittsburgh Opera](#) celebrates its 71st season in 2009-10 with *Eugene Onegin*, *Falstaff*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Carmen* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. In addition to its mainstage productions, Pittsburgh Opera produces a range of programs to engage and enrich the community with more than 20,000 students, families and educators participating in its educational events annually. The internationally-renowned Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program is among the country's top training programs for rising opera stars, and the company's newly-designed administrative and rehearsal space, housed in a 139-year-old Air Brake Factory in the city's Strip District, provides space for events ranging from free community Brown Bag concerts to concert and recitals by world-class opera singers.*

Single tickets for as little as \$10

Season subscriptions for as little as \$21

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