



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Fidelio Cast Biographies



(Johannesburg, South Africa)

Acclaimed soprano **Elza van den Heever** brings her signature vocalism and renowned stage presence to celebrated international venues in the 2019/20 season. Her first operatic engagement takes her to Vienna, where she debuts as Julia in a new production by Johannes Erath of Spontini's *La Vestale* at the Theater an der Wien. She later returns to The Metropolitan Opera to sing her first Marie in Berg's *Wozzeck* opposite baritone Peter Mattei and conducted by the Met's Music Director Yannick Nézet-

Séguin. This production, set to be a highlight of the Met Opera season, will also receive a Live in HD broadcast.

Ms. van den Heever was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa and received her musical training at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Winner of the 2008 Seattle Opera International Wagner Competition, she continues to study with soprano and master teacher Sheri Greenawald. A dual citizen of France and South Africa, Ms. van den Heever makes her home in France.



(Auckland, New Zealand)

A native of New Zealand, **Simon O'Neill** is one of the finest helden-tenors on the international stage. He has frequently performed with the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Berlin, Vienna and Bayerische Staatsoper, Teatro alla Scala and the Bayreuth, Salzburg, Edinburgh and BBC Proms Festivals, appearing with a number of illustrious conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, Valery Gergiev, Sir Antonio Pappano, Pierre Boulez, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Colin Davis, Edo de Waart, Fabio Luisi, Donald Runnicles, Sir Simon Rattle, Christian Thielemann, Jaap van Zweden, Daniel Harding, Simone Young, Andris

Nelsons, Pietari Inkinen, Esa Pekka Salonen and Gustavo Dudamel.

Simon became an Officer of New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours list, he is an alumnus and holds a Doctor of Music (Honoris Causa) from Victoria University of Wellington and is an alumnus of the University of Otago, the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard Opera Center. He is a Fulbright Scholar, was awarded the 2005 Arts Laureate of New Zealand and was a grand finalist in the 2002 Metropolitan Opera National Auditions returning as guest artist in 2007. He also appears on the 1998 New Zealand one-dollar performing arts postage stamp.



(Heilbronn, Germany)

Born in Heilbronn, Germany, **Falk Struckmann** has appeared at all the important opera houses and festivals throughout the world. He made his début at the Bayreuth Festival in 1993 as Kurwenal under Daniel Barenboim.

In the following years he worked mainly at the Staatsoper Berlin, where he sang in new productions of *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Parsifal*, *Fidelio* and *Elektra*. Further engagements include *Salome* and *Wozzeck*. He made his début at La Scala in the 1990s as Siegfried and at the New York Met as Wozzeck. He has sung in numerous premières at the Vienna State Opera and was awarded the title *Kammersänger* by both the Vienna and the Berlin State Opera Companies.



(Craryville, New York)

Gaining rapid international and national acclaim for his commanding performances, **Alfred Walker** sings his first American performances of the title role of *Der fliegende Holländer* with Boston Lyric Opera and joins the roster of the Teatro alla Scala for its production of the same title in the 2012–2013 season. He returns to the Boston Symphony Orchestra to reprise Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* and to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for Verdi's *Requiem* in addition to the Metropolitan Opera for its productions of *Il trovatore* and *Don Giovanni*. Future engagements include returns to Seattle Opera and Minnesota Opera as well as debuts at the Wagner Geneva Festival and with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Last season, he reprised his performances of Parsi Rustomji in *Glass' Satyagraha* at the Metropolitan Opera and sang Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Palm Beach Opera. On the concert platform, he joined the Stuttgart Philharmonic for Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and the Reno Philharmonic for Verdi's *Requiem*.

A graduate of Dillard University, Loyola University and the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Program, the New Orleans native is the recipient of awards from the George London Foundation, Palm Beach Opera Competition, Houston Opera Studio's Eleanor McCollum Competition and the Sullivan Foundation career grant.