



THE GÖTEBORG OPERA HOSTS THE WORLD PREMIERE
OF *NOTORIOUS*, A NEW OPERA WRITTEN FOR NINA
STEMME AND BASED ON HITCHCOCK'S THRILLER,
COINCIDING WITH INGRID BERGMAN'S CENTENARY



19 September - 1 November 2015

19, 23, 27, 30 September / 3, 8, 11, 15, 21, 24, 30 October / 1 November

Alicia Hauser NINA STEMME
Devlin JOHN LUNDGREN
Alex Sebastian MICHAEL WEINIUS
Madame Sebastian KATARINA KARNÉUS
Prescott JÓN KETILSSON
Alicia's father ANDERS LORENTZSON
Emil Hupka JONAS OLOFSSON

Conductor PATRIK RINGBORG
Direction KEITH WARNER
Set and costume design DAVID FIELDING
Lighting design JOHN BISHOP
Choreography MICHAEL BARRY

Commissioned by the Göteborg Opera to open the 2015/16 Season in Gothenburg, *Notorious*, a new opera written for soprano Nina Stemme by Swedish composer Hans Gefors, will be premiered on 19 September 2015 in a new production by Keith Warner. Coinciding with Ingrid Bergman's Centenary, *Notorious* will run for 12 performances until 1 November. Librettist Kerstin Perski has adapted Alfred Hitchcock's spy thriller with Swedish screen icon Bergman, for the opera. The partially monochrome production by set designer David Fielding will echo the original with haunting, shadowy references from the movie. Alongside Nina Stemme - acclaimed as the world's greatest Wagnerian soprano ("*no more perfect Isolde*" Independent) - the Göteborg Opera has assembled a stellar cast of Wagnerian singers from Sweden including Katarina Karneus, John Lundgren and Michael Weinius led from the conductor's podium by Patrik Ringborg.

This will be the fourth modern opera to be performed by the Göteborg Opera in 2015 preceded by John Adams' *A Flowering Tree*, Janáček's *Makropulos Case*, Schönberg's *Erwartung* and Bartok's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. In the 2015/16 season, Göteborg Opera's Artistic director Stephen Langridge has programmed five operas - of which three are new productions - including the Swedish premiere of Ambroise Thomas' *Hamlet* directed by Langridge himself and the early Brescia version of *Madama Butterfly*.



62-year-old Hans Gefors is Scandinavia's leading opera composer. His breakthrough as a composer came in 1986 with his grand opera *Christina* about the former Queen of Sweden, which has become Sweden's unofficial "national opera". His second large-scale opera *Der Park* was premiered in Wiesbaden in 1992, which was followed by *Cry Wolf* (about children taken hostage in a French school), premiered in Malmö in 1997. In 1998, Opera Comique commissioned Gefors and screen-writer Jean-Claude Carrière (Bunuel, Forman) to write the opera *Clara* (a thriller about a daughter's search for her father's killer) to mark their anniversary season. A recording of Gefors' *Lydias sånger* with Anne-Sofie von Otter, Kent Nagano and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra was released for Deutsche Grammophon. Naxos too has released three discs of his music including *La Boite Chinoise* on The Frosty Silence disc, *Snurra* for wind instruments and *Fours Songs of Trusting*.

Five years ago Gefors was commissioned to write a new opera by the Göteborg Opera's former opera director Lise-Lotte Axelsson. The idea of *Notorious* was muted early on in the commissioning process and immediately caught on with the obvious choice of Nina Stemme to play the role of Ingrid Bergman's Alicia. Gefors had previously written a song cycle for Stemme in 2002, which was also performed in Gothenburg. The cinematic choice of *Notorious* for the opera follows a recent trend amongst contemporary composers turning to the silver screen for inspiration as opposed to novels or plays.



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Gefors composed the music with the voices of the four main singers in mind, setting Alicia's husband as a lyric tenor dominated by his manipulative matriarch with a spit-fire coloratura and a penchant for murder by slow poisoning. Gefors and Perski's objective was not to be unfailingly faithful to the original thriller, nor to remake the film as an opera. So they have transposed scenes such as the day at the races to a night at the opera, which enables the addition of a chorus as the Figures of Darkness to whom Alicia in defiance hands over her father, a notorious Nazi, at the beginning of the drama. Gefors' music follows a dramatic arch with a refreshing lyricism and accessibility; nor is he shy to quote the music of Rio to set the scene for the story.



Notorious in the opera version is set during World War II where CIA agent Devlin persuades the American Alicia to become a spy in Rio de Janeiro. They grow attracted to each other, but the mission compels Alicia to seduce a man on the enemy side - an old flame with a political objective. Blinded by jealousy, Devlin is forced to watch Alicia give herself to another man. In the original movie, Hitchcock's style focused on the close-up - including the "record-breaking" big-screen kiss - whereas Gefors' music will act

as an emotional close-up. The opera's libretto focuses on the themes of conflict between love and duty, which forms the backbone of most operatic history. Keith Warner's production will further play with the idea of Hitchcock's overpowering dominance of his leading ladies.

As the composer Hans Gefors explains:

“For me, *Notorious* is primarily a love-story set against a backdrop of World War II and the struggle for world supremacy. The suspense comes from the tension between the four main protagonists and the gradual crushing of Alicia’s will. Does she survive? As the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek, opera and Hitchcock enthusiast, explained, ‘Hitchcock’s masterpiece *Notorious* owes at least a part of its powerful impact to the fact that its denouement should be perceived against the background of at least two other possible outcomes that resonate in it as a kind of alternative history.’ If the main characters had not put everything at stake up to that point, an open ending would have been meaningless. Alicia changed the course of her life - love broke the invisible shackles of her destiny. I see my opera as a tribute to the singing voice’s power over heart and soul. I could not have asked for a more powerful exponent for the role of Alicia than Nina Stemme.”

INGRID BERGMAN CENTENARY

Also marking Bergman’s 100th birthday on 29 August, there will be a new exhibition “The Rise and Fall of Ingrid Bergman. And Rise.” dedicated to the great Swedish actress at the Strandverket Museum on the island Marstrand, about 50 minutes from Gothenburg. In September before the premiere of *Notorious*, the Göteborg Opera will screen Hitchcock’s *Psycho* with a live performance of the film score. Cannes Film Festival will also be marking the Bergman centenary this year.



THE GÖTEBORG OPERA

The Göteborg Opera in its modern venue designed by Jan Izikowitz of Lund and Valentin was opened in October 1994. It seats 1,300 places and boasts a state of the art acoustic enhanced by special egg-tempera acoustic paint (which used 6,000 eggs). There is even space for a hidden chorus in the circular lighting rig in the middle of the auditorium. The building houses all the carpentry, metal and wood workshops for mounting full productions from the creation of the sets and props, to costumes, wigs and prosthetics with the latest environmentally-aware technology (such as an ozone cabinet to clean delicate costumes). The orchestra and chorus are fully adaptable for opera, dance and musicals and the diverse programme allows for audience to experiment with all three art forms, with a quarter regularly attending all three with little sign of the usual snobbery normally associated with opera.



2015-2016 Opera season of The Göteborg Opera

19 September - 1 November 2015

Notorious - Hans Gefors

Patrik Ringborg (conductor) | Keith Warner (direction)

21 November 2015 - 3 February 2016

The Makropulos Case - Leoš Janáček

Marko Ivanović (conductor) | David Rado (direction)

17 January - 14 February 2016

Le Nozze di Figaro - W.A. Mozart

Stephen Langridge (direction)

13 February - 18 May 2016

Madama Butterfly - Giacomo Puccini

Manlio Benzi (conductor) | Yoshi Oida (direction)

9 April - 21 May 2016

Hamlet - Ambroise Thomas

Henrik Schaefer (conductor) | Stephen Langridge (direction)

30 April - 22 May 2016

Macbeth - Giuseppe Verdi

Giancarlo Andretta (conductor) | David Radok (direction)



GÖTEBORGSOPERAN

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