

Enjoy a feast of free National Theatre and Met Opera streamings during lockdown

If you are looking for world-class entertainment in the comfort and safety of your house during the lockdown, you can indulge in daily free streamings from the National Theatre in London and the Met Opera in New York.



By [Daniel Dercksen](#) 8 May 2020

Simon Godwin (Hansard, Twelfth Night) directed the critically acclaimed production of Antony and Cleopatra that can be watched on YouTube until 14 May. In Shakespeare's tragedy, Caesar and his assassins are dead. General Mark Antony now rules alongside his fellow defenders of Rome. But at the fringes of a war-torn empire, the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra and Mark Antony have fallen fiercely in love. In a tragic fight between devotion and duty, obsession becomes a catalyst for war. Ralph Fiennes (The English Patient, James Bond: Spectre) and Sophie Okonedo (Chimerica, Hotel Rwanda) play Shakespeare's famous fated couple in his great tragedy of politics, passion and power.

Other NT Live streamings coming up are: Barber Shop Chronicles (premieres 14 May at 8pm on YouTube), this never-before-seen archive recording of Inua Ellams' smash-hit play, about the places where banter is barbed, and the truth is telling. A Streetcar Named Desire (premieres 21 May at 8pm on YouTube) – Gillian Anderson and Vanessa Kirby play Blanche and Stella in the Young Vic production of Tennessee Williams' American classic. This House (premieres 28 May 8pm on YouTube) – James Graham's timely, biting and funny portrait of British Politics in the 1970s. Coriolanus (premieres 4 June May at 8pm on YouTube) – Tom Hiddleston plays the title role in the Donmar Warehouse's production of Shakespeare's searing political tragedy.

Opera buffs are in opera heaven with the Met's series of free Nightly Opera Streams that features outstanding performances from the award-winning Live in HD series. A great advantage for South Africans is that it is streamed nightly in the US, which means we can watch it daily until midnight! You can watch it in subtitles and there were some fantastic backstage interviews after each viewing.

Puccini's heartbreaking *La Bohème* (9 May) is a story of young love in the garrets of Belle Époque Paris that has attracted many famous singers through the years. But with James Levine at the helm and the starry duo of Luciano Pavarotti and Renata Scotto as Rodolfo and Mimi, every bit of emotion in the score pours across the footlights and seduces the audience. In this case, the audience was in the millions since this was the very first in the 'Live from the Met' series of telecasts. The evocative production is by Fabrizio Melano, designed by Pier Luigi Pizzi.

In the documentary *The Opera House* (10 May), award-winning filmmaker Susan Froemke explores the creation of the Metropolitan Opera's storied home of the last five decades. Drawing on rarely seen archival footage, stills, and recent interviews, *The Opera House* looks at an important period of the Met's history and delves into some of the untold stories of the artists, architects, and politicians who shaped the cultural life of New York City in the '50s and '60s. Among the notable figures in the film are famed soprano Leontyne Price, who opened the new Met in 1966 in Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*; Rudolf Bing, the Met's imperious General Manager who engineered the move from the old house to the new one; Robert Moses, the unstoppable city planner who bulldozed an entire neighbourhood to make room for Lincoln Center; and Wallace Harrison, whose quest for architectural glory was never fully realized.

Director David McVicar's new production of *Cavalleria Rusticana* & *Pagliacci* (11 May) brings opera's favourite double bill new life, setting the two operas in the same Sicilian setting, separated by two generations. Marcelo Álvarez takes on the rare feat of singing both leading tenor roles. In *Cavalleria*, he is Turiddu, the young man who abandons Santuzza (Eva-Maria Westbroek) in his pursuit of the married Lola (Ginger Costa-Jackson)—and ends up being killed in a duel with her husband Alfio (George Gagnidze). In *Pagliacci*, Álvarez is Canio, the leader of a travelling vaudeville troupe. Patricia Racette sings Nedda, his unfaithful young wife, whose plans to run away with her lover are foiled by her spurned admirer Tonio (George Gagnidze)—with equally tragic consequences. Met Principal Conductor Fabio Luisi is on the podium.

Other operas to watch are Strauss's *Ariadne Auf Naxos*, featuring Jessye Norman (pictured) and Kathleen Battle, and the stormy landscape of Thomas Adès's *The Tempest*, to the neon lights of Michael Mayer's *Las Vegas Rigoletto* and the biblical setting of Verdi's *Nabucco*, next week's line-up offers passage to several of opera's most distinctive destinations. Another highlight is this next Friday's Viewers' Choice stream, a 1982 telecast of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* starring the legendary Joan Sutherland.

[Click here](#) to watch the Met Operas.

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za View my profile and articles...

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