

Warm up your winter blues with free opera, ballet and theatre streamings

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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Here are some free opera, ballet and theatre streamings you can catch during these wintery lockdown times.

Swan Lake

Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* is a contemporary ballet based on the Russian romantic work *Swan Lake*, from which it takes the music by Tchaikovsky and the broad outline of the plot. Bourne's rendering is best known for having the traditionally female parts of the swans danced by men.

The Deep Blue Sea

Carrie Cracknell's critically acclaimed production of Terence Rattigan's devastating masterpiece features Helen McCrory (*Medea*, *Peaky Blinders*) and Tom Burke (*War and Peace*, *The Musketeers*). It's 1952, in West London. When Hester Collyer is found by her neighbours in the aftermath of a failed suicide attempt, the story of her tempestuous affair with a former RAF pilot and the breakdown of her marriage to a High Court judge begins to emerge. With it comes a portrait of need, loneliness and long-repressed passion. Behind the fragile veneer of post-war civility burns a brutal sense of loss and longing. It's a sad fact of romantic mathematics that two doesn't go into three. Nobody knows that better than Sir William Collyer, his wife Hester and her lover Freddie. This NT Live production streams until July.

15 hours of epic Wagner opera

If you want to challenge yourself to a marathon of 15 hours of epic opera, BBC Arts and The Space presented Richard Wagner's monumental *Ring Cycle*, in a radically stripped-back, critically acclaimed production by Opera North. Filmed during live performances in Leeds in 2016. Set in a world populated by dwarfs and giants, gods and river-maidens, *Das Rheingold* thrillingly establishes the cycle, beginning with music that evokes the very dawn of time. In *Die Walküre* (Part 2), it is a human emotion that takes centre stage, with musical highlights including Winterstürme and the Ride of the Valkyries. Wagner's unparalleled orchestral scene-painting reaches new heights as we meet the daring hero Siegfried in Part 3, the grandson of Wotan, king of the gods. The musical and dramatic power of *Götterdämmerung* (Part 4) is awe-inspiring, as the epic cycle concludes with the end of the old world of the gods, and the dawn of a new era. There's also some inspiring bonus material.

La Boheme

If there's one reason to not miss the Royal Opera's glorious production of *La Boheme*, it's for the magnificent performances of Nicole Car, Michael Fabiano and Mariusz Kwiecień. You can still stream Richard Jones's stunning production until 17 July. It perfectly captures the vulnerability of youth amid the harshness and glamour of a big city. The atmospheric designs, by Stewart Laing, evoke both the poverty of the bohemians' attic home and the splendour of Paris's shopping arcades on Christmas Eve. The opera blends tragedy and comedy, the soulful and the spirited, into a powerful encapsulation of the intenseness of life's experiences to its young would-be artists and their lovers, in this recording performed by a winning young cast under the baton of Antonio Pappano, music director of The Royal Opera.

Metropolitan Opera

Eva-Maria Westbroek stars in the title role of Zandonai's sensuous drama *Francesca da Rimini* (10 July), based on an episode from Dante's *Inferno*, the melodramatic plot concerns an affair between the title character and the handsome brother of a cruel and disfigured warlord, to whom she is betrothed. Piero Faggioni's lush production provides the perfect setting for one of the all-time great tales of tragic passion.

Tchaikovsky's masterpiece *Eugene Onegin* (11 July) exemplifies the dramatic sweep, complex characterisation and insight into human nature that defines great Russian literature and music. The story comes from Pushkin and provides one of opera's most compelling heroines: Tatiana, an intelligent but naïve adolescent girl who is first rejected by an older, more worldly man, then blossoms into an elegant, rich, aristocratic woman and returns the favour when the two meet again. Anna Netrebko stars as Tatiana, the young woman whose impulsive declaration of love is coolly rejected by Mariusz Kwiecien's Onegin - with unexpected consequences years later.

Ever since it opened the 2006–07 season, Anthony Minghella's striking production of *Madama Butterfly* (12 July) has been a Met classic. Drawing inspiration from traditional Japanese theatre, Minghella's staging retells this heartbreaking tale with brilliant stagecraft, bold colours and *bunraku* puppetry. Key to the staging is symbolic visuals that tap into traditional Japanese culture while honouring the searching, timeless beauty of Puccini's mid-career masterpiece. In this Live in HD performance from the fall of 2019, Chinese soprano Hui He stars as Cio-Cio-San, the young geisha who puts her trust in a visiting American naval officer, only to later be abandoned by him. In a feat of operatic heroics, tenor Bruce Sledge appears as the callous Pinkerton.

Inspired by Wagner's own tortured affair with the wife of his patron, this searing masterwork *Tristan und Isolde* (13 July) is based on Arthurian legend and tells of an illicit romance between a Breton nobleman and the Irish princess betrothed to his uncle and king. The utter timelessness of Wagner's masterpiece is superbly captured in Dieter Dorn's production, designed by Jürgen Rose. It strips away the usual visual ballast from the drama to reveal the searing emotional truth at its core. Under James Levine's probing conducting the great Met Orchestra is a central character in the story. Ben Heppner and Jane Eaglen are Tristan and Isolde, overwhelmed by their all-consuming love for each other which defies society and the law. René Pape is a devastating King Marke, the man robbed of his wife by his best friend. Hans-Joachim Ketelsen and

Katarina Dalayman complete the cast

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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

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