

Daniel Catán

Salsipuedes

Florencia en el Amazonas

La Hija de Rappaccini

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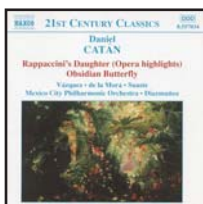
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Florencia en el Amazonas
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Albany/Troy CD 531/32

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Photo by David Siccardi / San Diego Opera

Daniel Catán

La Hija de Rappaccini

Florencia en el Amazonas

Salsipuedes

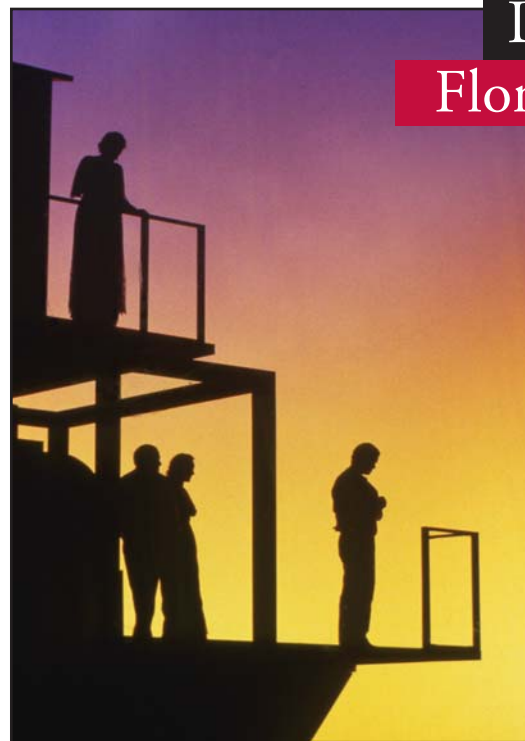


Photo by George Hixon / Houston Grand Opera



Photo by Brett Coomer / Houston Grand Opera

Salsipuedes

Comic Opera in Three Acts, 2004
Duration: full evening

Libretto by Eliseo Alberto and Francisco Hinojosa;
English trans. by Shane Gasbarra and Daniel Catán

CAST
3S, Mz, 4T, Bar, B, Speaker; SAT Chorus
(24 voices total)

ORCHESTRATION
3(pic).2.5(bcl).2/3.4Ctpr.2+btbn.1/
timp.perc/pf.hp/4vc.4db; 4onstage perc

WORLD PREMIERE
October 29, 2004
Houston Grand Opera

Conductor Guido Maria Guida
Production James Robinson
Set Designer Allen Moyer
Costume Designer Constance Hoffman
Lighting Designer James F. Ingalls



photo courtesy of Daniel Catán

SYNOPSIS

The comic opera is set on the fictional island of Salsipuedes in 1943. When the island's one-boat navy gears up to take on the Nazis, the males of two newly-married couples are mistakenly taken aboard the ship, to the consternation of their wives. The couples are finally reunited in Puerto Alegre, where they learn about love, trust and fidelity. Once reconciled, the couples unearth a treacherous plot by the captain of the ship, resulting in tragedy, sacrifice and new beginnings.

My new opera uses the rhythms [of] the Caribbean. The Caribbean, it's worth recalling, was the great melting pot of three fantastic music cultures. On the one hand there was the European culture brought by so many immigrants from the Continent; there was the very rich legacy from the Middle East brought by the Spanish in particular; and finally, there was the African stream. These elements combined to produce a remarkable result that has barely been explored. I consider the comic opera a very delicate genre. A comedy in this century cannot be the same as it was in the 17th or 18th century. For me, comedy is a very serious matter, because it has to joke about things that are otherwise difficult to discuss, and it must also reflect contemporary issues. You have to draw a smile from the listener and at the same time deliver a very serious message. That is what makes it so very challenging.

—Daniel Catán



CRITICAL ACCLAIM

...[The] premiere of Catán's warmhearted comedy about ordinary people accidentally caught up in the machinations of a corrupt and delusional dictator evoked smiles, chuckles and good feelings...

...A major asset was the literate and deftly imaginative libretto of Eliseo Alberto and Francisco Hinojosa. With just a few words the pair could establish mood as well as sketch characters and send the action careening forward...Repeatedly, the story inspired Catán to compose very striking individual scenes...Permeated with Afro-Caribbean rhythms, the score had powerful writing for the voices—big duets for the lovers, aching arias for the distressed women, and major scenes for seemingly secondary characters...

—Charles Ward, *Houston Chronicle*



On Oct. 29, Houston Grand Opera celebrated its 50th anniversary year with its 31st world premiere, Daniel Catán's *Salsipuedes*... Though billed as a Caribbean comedy, this lively opera was unexpectedly dark... The opera alternated between high-spirited crowd scenes, with pungent African drums and Latin rhythms, and rhapsodic vocal writing that recalled *Madama Butterfly* and *La Rondine*... Catán's orchestral originality went beyond his use of unconventional instruments. The orchestra has no violins or violas, and the winds, brass and low strings that remained were used with a refreshing sparseness, sometimes dropping out of the mix altogether... the opera was entertaining and at times very touching.

—Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*



Above photos by Brett Coomer
Houston Grand Opera

Opera in Two Acts, 1996
Duration: 2 hours, 20 minutes

Libretto in Spanish by Marcela Fuentes-Berain

CAST AND ORCHESTRATION
2S, Mz, T, 2Bar, B; SATB Chorus
2(pic).22+bcl.2(cbn)/3221/timp.4perc/hp.pf/str (4.4.4.4.3)

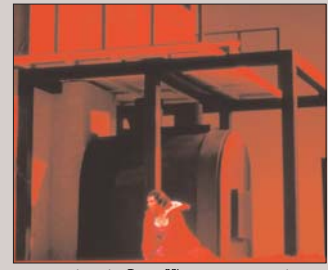
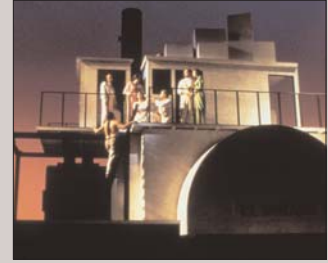
WORLD PREMIERE
October 25, 1996, Houston Grand Opera

Vjekoslav Sutej, conductor
Francesca Zambello, Director
Robert Israel, Designer

Florencia en el Amazonas



Vocal score
50484955
for sale.



photos by George Hizon, Houston Grand Opera

SYNOPSIS

The steamboat El Dorado is sailing down the Amazon in the early 1900s. The passengers are travelling to hear the legendary but intensely private opera singer Florencia Grimaldi sing at the reopening of the theatre in Manaus. Riolo, a mystical character who can assume many forms introduces the embarking passengers: Paula and Alvaro, a middle-aged couple attempting to rekindle their marriage; Rosalba, a journalist researching a biography on Grimaldi; and Florencia herself, travelling alone and incognito, harbouring a burning desire to find her long-lost lover Cristóbal, a butterfly-hunter, whose love unlocked her staggering powers of musical expression. Once en route, Rosalba accidentally drops her research notes overboard. The Captain's nephew, Arcadio, manages to rescue them, and the pair becomes aware of a strong mutual attraction. The evening concludes as Paula and Alvaro's attempt at a romantic dinner dissolves into a bitter squabble.

Initially unaware of her identity, the Captain tells Florencia of the fate of Cristóbal, who disappeared without trace in the jungle, thus dashing her dearest ambition. As a heated card game brings out the contrasting sexual and hostile tensions between Rosalba and Arcadio, and Paula and Alvaro, a violent storm brews outside. In saving the ship from being crushed, Alvaro is swept overboard; the Captain is knocked unconscious and despite Arcadio's efforts at the helm, the ship runs aground.

Paula mourns the loss of Alvaro, realizing that it was pride and not lack of love that stood between them. Riolo appears again mysteriously to return Alvaro to the ship, claiming that Paula's laments saved him from death. Rosalba, distraught that her notebook has been ruined in the storm, talks to the incognito Florencia about her research. During the ensuing discussion on Grimaldi, Florencia declares passionately that Grimaldi's gift was a result of her love for Cristóbal. Rosalba realizes that she is talking to her heroine and, hearing her story, decides her own love for Arcadio shouldn't be suppressed.

La Hija de Rappaccini

Opera in Two Acts, 1983
Duration: 1 hour, 45 minutes

Spanish libretto by Juan Tovar, based on the play by Octavio Paz and the short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne

WORLD PREMIERE
April 25, 1991; Teatro del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City

American Premiere: March 5, 1994
San Diego Opera

Chamber Version: February 25, 2011
University of Texas at Austin



Photo by David Siccardi / San Diego Opera

CAST AND ORCHESTRATION
S, Mz, 2T, Bar, 3 offstage female voices
3(pic)+2rec.3(ca).3(bcl).3/4331/timp.3perc/pf.cel.hp/str
alt. (chamber version): 2perc.hp.2pf

SYNOPSIS

Catán's setting of *Rappaccini's Daughter* is based on the Nathaniel Hawthorne story, and retold by Mexican Nobel Prize-winning author Octavio Paz. Set during the Italian Renaissance, *Rappaccini's Daughter* is a multi-layered story that deals not only with the scientific struggle of good and evil, but also with the blurring gray lines created as both good and evil merge.

Catán elaborates, "When we reach boundaries of human knowledge we stare into the most profound darkness... There is heaven, but also hell on the other side. A vision can be perverted. An ideal can be made to serve the most horrific and inhumane causes... *Rappaccini's Daughter* is an opera for the 21st century."