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Photo by J. Henry Fair

Learn more about *The Ghosts of Versailles* at www.musicsalesclassical.com. Photos from *The Ghosts of Versailles* courtesy of the LA Opera.

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The Ghosts of Versailles

Libretto HL 50481578
Vocal Score HL 50482739
DVD: 1992 Metropolitan Opera premiere; James Levine, cond. Decca 1135701355

For more information contact Peggy Monastra,
peggy.monastra@schirmer.com, 212-254-2100.

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John Corigliano

The Ghosts of Versailles

An opera in two acts (1991)



"A HIT. . . DIVERTING
and SPECTACULAR."

- Martha Duffy, *TIME* Magazine

The Ghosts of Versailles



Music by John Corigliano
Libretto by William H. Hoffman

World Premiere: December 1991, Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY

Reduced Version: June 2009, Opera theatre of St. Louis, St. Louis, MO

cast list

PRINCIPALS

(14 soloists play one role only)

FLORESTINE: *High Lyric or Coloratura Soprano*

ROSINA: *Lyric soprano*

SUSANNA: *Mezzo-soprano (or Mezzo-contralto)*

ALMAVIVA: *Lyric tenor*

LÉON: *Lyric tenor*

PATRICK HONORÉ BÉGEARSS: *Lyric tenor*

BEAUMARCHAIS: *High lyric baritone*

FIGARO: *Lyric baritone*

LOUIS XVI: *Bass*

GHOST QUARTET: *Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass*

MARIE ANTOINETTE: *Lyric/Lirico-spinto*

Soprano

ENSEMBLE (10 soloists playing multiple supporting roles)

4S, 2Mz, 2T, 2B

Plays Pursuers of Figaro, Turkish duelists, page dancing and harem girls, "rbeita" players, acrobats, revolutionary guards, revolutionary women, courtiers, dancers, prison guards, prisoners, soldiers

ASSOCIATE PRINCIPALS

(4 soloists play 1 main role among other supporting roles)

CHERUBINO: *High lyric mezzo-soprano;*

also plays Figaro Pursuer 5/Turkish Embassy Pursuer 6/Revolutionary Woman 5

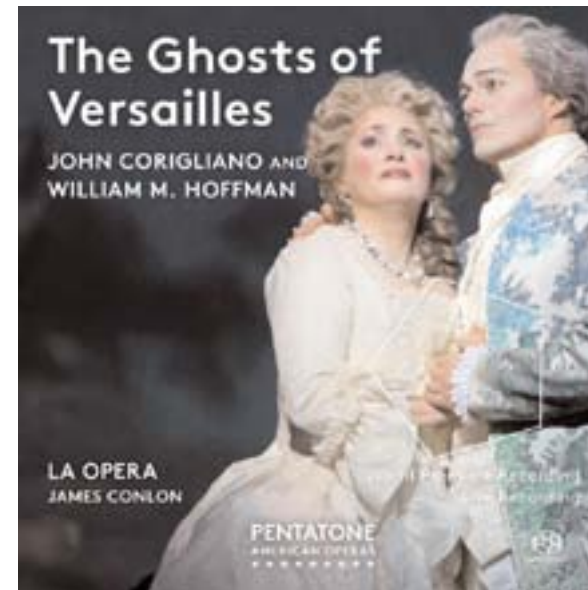
SAMIRA: *Mezzo-soprano; also plays*

Figaro Pursuer 6/Revolutionary Woman 6

WILHELM: *Baritone & spoken part; also*

plays Other Man (Fig. Pursuer 9)/(T.E. Pursuer 10)/Juror 2/Finale Pursuer 10

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LA Opera presents the live recording of the *The Ghosts of Versailles* (2015). Darko Tresnjak directs this production. Starring Patricia Racette as Marie Antoinette, Patti LuPone as Samira, Christopher Maltman as Beaumarchais, Robert Brubaker as Begearss, Lucas Meachem as Figaro and Lucy Schauer as Susanna. LA Opera orchestra conducted by James Conlon. Recording engineered by Mark Donahue, Fred Vogler, and David L Williams.

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Above: cast of The Ghosts of Versailles.
Left: Ghosts of Versailles

Photos courtesy of LA Opera.

orchestration

FULL ORCHESTRA VERSION

3(2pic).3(ca).3(Ebcl,bcl).3(cbn)/4431/timp.4perc/hp.pf(cel).Kurzweil K-2500 synthesizer/str

REDUCED ORCHESTRA VERSION

2(2pic).2(ca).2(Ebcl,bcl).2(cbn)/2220/timp(perc).3perc/hp.pf(cel).Kurzweil K-2500 synthesizer/str (66443 players)

about the orchestra & cast

The original production included ensembles onstage:

players = hpd, man, gtr, hp, vn, va, 3vc, 2db; rheita band = ob, 2perc;
ball orch = fl, vn, va, vc; marchers = 2hn, [opt 2tpt, perc]

In both the full and reduced orchestrations, the parts for these players have now been incorporated into the pit orchestra parts. Major productions to date, including the premiere, cast more singers than are actually required by the list of major and supporting roles. The opera requires only a minimum of twenty-eight performers to fulfill its casting requirements.



opera synopsis

ACT ONE

The ghosts of the court of Louis XVI arrive at the theatre of Versailles. Bored and listless, even the King is uninterested when Beaumarchais arrives and declares his love for the Queen. As Marie Antoinette is too haunted by her execution to reciprocate his love, Beaumarchais announces his intention to change her fate through the plot of his new opera 'A Figaro for Antonia.'

The cast of the opera-within-the-opera is introduced. Following the familiar escapades of the Figaro characters, Almaviva has divorced the Countess after she had a son, Leon, with Cherubino. Leon wants to marry Florestine, Almaviva's illegitimate daughter, but the Count has forbidden the union as retribution for his wife's infidelity and has promised Florestine instead to Bégearss.

Figaro enrages the Count by warning him that his trusted Bégearss is in fact a revolutionary spy. Figaro is fired, but overhears Bégearss and his servant Wilhelm hatching a plot to arrest the Count that evening at the Turkish Embassy when he sells the Queen's necklace to the English Ambassador. Figaro intercepts the plot by infiltrating the party, dressed as a dancing girl. During the outrageous performance of the Turkish singer Samira, Figaro steals the necklace from the

Count before the sale can take place, and runs away.

ACT TWO

Figaro returns only to defy Beaumarchais's intention that he return the necklace to the queen, as he wants to sell it to help the Almavivas escape. To put the story back on course, Beaumarchais enters the opera and shocks Figaro into submission by allowing him to witness the unfair trial of Marie.

The Count, swayed by his wife's wishes, rescinds his offer to Bégearss of his daughter's hand. Even though Figaro gives him the necklace, Bégearss is enraged and sends the Spaniards to the prison where Marie Antoinette lingers.

Beaumarchais and Figaro, the only two to escape, arrive at the prison to try to rescue the Almavivas. They are shortly followed by Bégearss whom Figaro denounces to the revolutionaries, revealing that he has kept the necklace rather than using it to feed the poor. Bégearss is carried off, the Almavivas escape to America and Beaumarchais is left with the keys to the Queen's cell. But the power of his love has made the Queen accept her fate and she refuses to let Beaumarchais alter the course of history. Marie is executed, and the pair is united in Paradise.

"Stripped of big sets and big names, it's now primarily about human relationships and human truths. As a result, [*The Ghosts of Versailles*] resonates far longer in the heart."

- Sarah Bryan Miller, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

production notes

The basic premise of *The Ghosts of Versailles* is that a group of ghosts is watching an opera. Because of this structure, the opera takes place on three planes of reality:

- 1) The world of eternity, inhabited by ghosts
- 2) The world of the stage, populated by dramatic characters
- 3) The world of history, populated by mortals

Our opera begins in the ghost world, which is the most fantastic and the most contemporary. It enters the stage world when spectral playwright Beaumarchais raises the curtain on *A Figaro for Antonia*, the buffa-within-the-opera that he has written to amuse Marie Antoinette two hundred years after their deaths. The ghostly characters watching the onstage production are fantasy creatures themselves. If the makeup or costumes of the onstage characters outdo those of the ghosts, or if the sets are too ambiguous or surrealistic, it will be difficult for the audience to distinguish among the worlds. Therefore, the production on the stage-within-a-stage should almost always be more realistic than the ghost world. The ghost and the stage worlds are distinct until the second scene of Act II, when Beaumarchais enters the opera-within-the-opera and Figaro is summoned by Marie Antoinette to the afterworld. At the point the two worlds blend and we enter a third realm: the historical (or objective) universe of the Paris streets, the Almaviva ballroom, and the Place de la Révolution. The scenic design of this last world should be grand operatic: representational sets, realistic costumes.