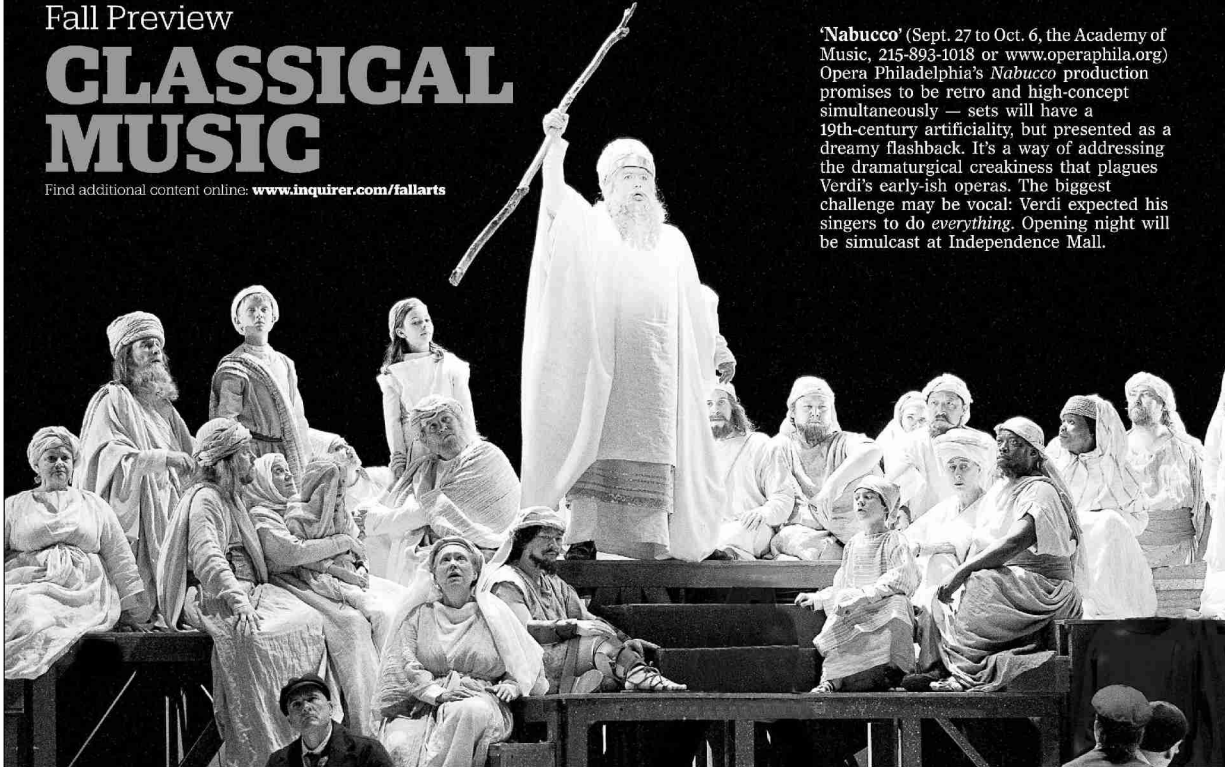


Fall Preview

CLASSICAL MUSIC

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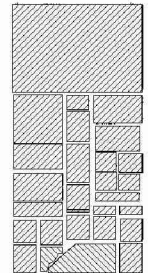
'Nabucco' (Sept. 27 to Oct. 6, the Academy of Music, 215-893-1018 or www.operaphila.org) Opera Philadelphia's *Nabucco* production promises to be retro and high-concept simultaneously — sets will have a 19th-century artificiality, but presented as a dreamy flashback. It's a way of addressing the dramaturgical creakiness that plagues Verdi's early-ish operas. The biggest challenge may be vocal: Verdi expected his singers to do *everything*. Opening night will be simulcast at Independence Mall.

The Opera Philadelphia season opens with Verdi's "Nabucco"; opening night will be simulcast at Independence Mall. SCOTT SUCHMAN / Washington National Opera

What was once the weakest link in Philadelphia's classical music season is now collectively walking off with the unofficial award for enterprising programming. Yes, choral organizations have been gathering strength for years, and now offer all manner of postcards from the edge.

One can always count on the Crossing choir for concerts never previously heard or imagined, whether world premieres or music from distant realms, like Latvia. And at the opposite chronological end of the repertoire, Choral Arts Philadelphia has six concerts of Bach cantatas juxtaposed with such like-minded pieces as Heinrich Biber's *Rosary Sonatas*.

The Mendelssohn Club rolls out a big gun next spring with its premiere of Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields*, but in the more immediate future it



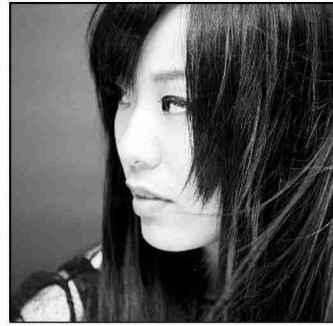
continues on its collaboration-minded way, most significantly with the Kimmel Center organ. Even the Opera Company of Philadelphia is presenting a choral opera, *Svadba*, as an insert in its regular season. Meanwhile, no Philadelphia Orchestra music director has been as oriented toward choral music as Yannick Nézet-Séguin. His fall contribution is Nico Muhly's 2005 *Bright Mass*, heard here in its first performance in an orchestral version.

— David Patrick Stearns, *Inquirer* music critic



MATTHEW MURPHY

The Crossing (Sept. 15, the Icebox at Crane Arts. www.crossingchoir.com) John Luther Adams — not to be confused with the composer of *Nixon in China* — has a major Philadelphia premiere with the Crossing choir, co-commissioner of his *Canticles of the Holy Wind*, an evening-length work that, typical of this Alaska-based composer, is inspired by weather, nature, and wildlife. The season is titled “Astralis,” after the Wolfgang Rihm work the group sings Dec. 20.



SIMON FOWLER

Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia (Sept. 15 and 16, the Kimmel Center, 215-893-1999, www.chamber-orchestra.org) The young Korean pianist HJ Lim created a sensation with an EMI recording debut of all 32 Beethoven piano sonatas. Still in her mid-20s, she makes her Chamber Orchestra debut leaving the Beethoven to music director Dirk Brossé (who leads the *Symphony No. 4*) and playing Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 1*.

Philadelphia Orchestra (Sept. 26 to 28, Kimmel Center, 215-893-1999, www.philorch.org) Nico Muhly and Ludwig van Beethoven? Maybe they're not the couple of the new century but they'll share the orchestra's opening subscription series — Muhly's piece serene and meditative, Beethoven's boisterously propulsive. How will that feel? We'll see.

Astral Artists (Sept. 28, the Perelman Theater, 215-735-6999 or www.astralartists.org) The evening brings together increasingly celebrated Latin American composers, with the Philadelphia premiere of Osvaldo Golijov's *Ayre* plus works by Astor

Piazzolla, Alberto Ginastera, and Paquito D'Rivera that could send you tangoing into the night. Performers, drawn from Astral's young-artist roster, include harpist Bridget Kibbey and flutist Angel Hsiao.

'The Emperor of Atlantis' (Oct. 10 to 13, Curtis Opera Studio, 215-893-7902 or www.curtis.edu) Viktor Ullmann's opera *The Emperor of Atlantis* can't be separated from the circumstances of its creation at the Nazi work camp Terezin, a way station to death for its many artistically gifted inmates. Ullmann was a tough, uncompromising composer who no doubt expected much to be read into his allegorical opera, which is performed by Curtis Opera Theatre.

New Concerto Festival (Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, Kimmel Center, 215-893-1999 or www.philorch.org) The Philadelphia Orchestra inaugurates a festival of new concertos with shifting programs for each of three concerts. Unveiled on Oct. 31 is Behzad Ranjbaran's *Flute Concerto* and Tan Dun's *Nu Shu: The Secret Songs of Women*, Symphony for 12 Micro Films, Harp, and Orchestra. The Nov. 1 concert substitutes Ranjbaran with David Ludwig's *Pictures From the Floating World* for bassoon and orchestra. Nov. 2 brings together Ludwig and Ranjbaran. Soloists are orchestra members.

Choral Arts Philadelphia (Oct. 15, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 267-240-2586 or www.choralarts.com) Choral Arts begins its Bach cantata series with some of the composer's most personal music, albeit with texts that can often seem arcane at best, finger-wagging at worst. So context is warranted: In this program, *Cantata No. 198* is heard alongside organ works by Pachelbel and a hymn by

Orlando Gibbons. The second installment is Nov. 20. **'The Nose'** (Oct. 26, area theaters, 212-362-6000 or www.metoperafamily.org) Of all the starry, glamorous productions among the Metropolitan Opera's HD simulcast season, the one that's easiest to overlook might be Shostakovich's raucously funny *The Nose*, simulcast in six area movie theaters. Is it really an opera about a renegade nose? Yes! We're talking Nikolai Gogol's brand of absurdist satire. The production by William Kentridge is outstanding, and the music shows Shostakovich in his feral, pre-Stalinist state.

'Svadba' (Nov. 2 to 7, FringeArts, 215-893-1018 www.operaphila.org) Brush up on your Serbian. Ana Sokolovic's a cappella choral opera *Svadba* inaugurates Opera Philadelphia's Opera in the City series at the new FringeArts building. The opera is a Balkan night-before-the-wedding party with the bride and her friends celebrating, fretting, and singing in a manner that will be familiar to anyone who knows the Bulgarian Women's Choir, and bracingly exotic to those who don't.



Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club brings sunny Cuban songs to the Merriam Theater Oct. 9.

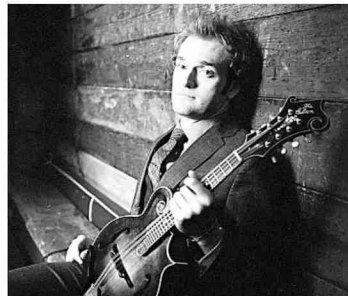
LET'S CALL IT CLASSIC POP

From the Great American Songbook to genre fusions that don't fit in any category, the Philadelphia season has a number of potentially notable events that one can classify only as "none and all of the above."

► **Barbara Cook** Known affectionately among friends and family as "B.C.," the 85-year-old Broadway legend inaugurates the Prince Music Theater's Morgan Cabaret Oct. 2 to 5 (215-893-1955 or www.princemusictheater.org).

► **Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club** It is what it says — sunny, inviting Cuban songs performed by authentic voices and instrumentalists who have it in their bones. Oct. 9 at the Merriam Theater (215-893-1999 or www.kimmelcenter.org).

► **Patti LuPone** The sixtysomething star of pretty much everything, from *Evita* to *Gypsy*, seems never to stop, and why should she? Her voice is in better shape now than when she was in her 40s. Nov. 20 to 23 at the Prince Music Theater (215-893-1955 or www.princemusictheater.org).



► **Philly Pops** The season under witty new conductor Michael Krajewski starts with "Viva Philadelphia!" (as if we need to be told), hopefully inaugurating a fun new era for these concerts. Oct. 11 to 13 at the Kimmel Center (215-893-1999 or www.kimmelcenter.org).

▲ **Chris Thile** As improbable as he sounds, Thile is indeed a classical mandolin player whose Bach makes perfect sense in and of itself. Oct. 23 at the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater (215-893-1999 or www.kimmelcenter.org).

► **Sweet Honey in the Rock** Bolster yourself for an onslaught of Christmas carols with this durable vocal harmony group performing a program it calls "Celebrating the Holydays" (artfully neglecting to tell us which ones) at the Annenberg Center (215-898-3900 or www.pennpresents.org).



ROSALIE O'CONNOR

Augustin Hadelich (Dec. 15, presented by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, 215-569-8080 or www.pcm-concerts.org) Hadelich is one of the few violinists able to illuminate great music with apparent ease. The 29-year-old German violinist's performances of Édouard Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* with the Philadelphia Orchestra Oct. 24 to 26 no doubt will serve as an appetizer for this weightier recital of Beethoven, Kurtág, Schumann, and Janáček.



ADAM LEIGH-MANUELL

Ailyn Perez and Stephen Costello (Dec. 17, the Kimmel Center, 215-569-8080, or www.pcmsconcerts.org) Opera's sweetheart couple, on- and offstage, give a joint recital, and who cares what they're singing? They are wonderful artists individually and as a couple are a delightfully mixed match (she's Mexican American from Chicago; he's from Philly's Northeast). Just for the record, the program is crowd pleasers from *La Boheme*, *La Traviata*, and *Manon*.