

José Cura the Conductor

Perhaps Cura, who put conducting among his ambitions early in his career, will make the path more respectable for singers. Strangely enough, it may be a singer who wants it all who will prepare the public for singers who aspire to the podium. That could be a very good thing.

(Opera News, July 2005)

José Cura was born to conduct. He debuted, age 15 as a choral director and at 16 he began studies in composition with Carlos Castro and piano with Zulma Cabrera. Born in Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina, on 5 December 1962, Cura's musical talent matured quickly: at 12 he was playing guitar under Juan di Lorenzo's guidance and in 1982, he entered the Escuela Superior de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Rosario to continue his musical education in the specialties of composing and conducting. The following year he became assistant conductor for the university choir. At 21, he won a grant for a one year course at the Instituto Superior de Arte del Teatro Colón, where he continued to sing, operas and oratorios in the school choir until 1988, while focusing on enriching his composition and conducting aspirations through the first-hand experience granted by being part of the great Argentinean Coliseum activities. It was during those years that, as an example of his precocity, he first conducted Bach's 'St. Matthews Passion.'

The progression from innate understanding to sculpting original interpretations has been steady over the decades, even as Cura's career as an international tenor sensation tended to overshadow his work on the podium. Whether breathing with the singers in opera or concert, providing sensitive readings of delicate compositions or leading an orchestra in soaring symphonic grandeur, Cura never plays it safe. He inhabits the soundscape and claims it as his own.

Cura has always managed to find a way to fit what he loved most into his musical life; a Cura concert may find him accompanying himself on stage as he sings (a revolutionary concept when he introduced it but now emulated and more widely accepted) or conducting the orchestra in a wide arrange of intriguing pieces. He was the originator of the half and half concert: wielding his dark-hued, sensual tenor in song before effortlessly taking to the podium to impeccably shape a symphony. In either role, Cura comes radically alive in the music, sweeping the audience into his universe.

Conducting has been an intrinsic part of Cura's performing platform; from the start of his international career he has mixed podium work with vocalism in an informal way, as when he performed at the Festival Ljubljana in 2000. Formal recognition of his exceptional conducting abilities came in 2001, when Sinfonia Varsovia offered him a three-year assignment as principal guest conductor, a position previously held by the late Lord Yehudi Menuhin. Cura inaugurated his partnership with a spectacular concert in Warsaw in November 2001.

Concert, Warsaw: ***After the first collaborative performance of José Cura and Sinfonia Varsovia at the National Philharmonic the skeptics must become silent. The temperament and charisma of the Argentinean tenor, combined with the ensemble's perfection, may bring many interesting artistic results.*** Wprost, November 2001

Concert, Warsaw: Sinfonia ***Varsovia played sensationally under Cura's baton. The homogenous strains of the entire assemble was combined with the clarity of individual instruments' play. The polished solos, especially of the clarinet and oboe deserved the highest praise.*** Trybuna, November 2001

Concert, Warsaw: ***Yesterday the Sinfonia Varsovia inaugurated its co-operation with José Cura, the famous***

Argentinean tenor, in brilliant style. Gazeta Wyborcza, 26 November 2001

Concert, Warsaw: ***Sinfonia Varsovia played sensationally under Cura's baton.*** Trybuna, 27 November 2001

Concert, Sinfonia Varsovia: ***It would be difficult not to notice the excellent rapport that José Cura has with the Polish orchestra. Under his baton the instrumentalists play freely, there is this wonderful stress-free atmosphere.*** Slowo Polskie, January 2002

Concert, Sinfonia Varsovia: ***José Cura's concert is no doubt going to go down as one of the most important musical events in this region.*** Wyborcza Gazeta, January 2002

Concert, Vienna: ***The evening at the Great Hall of the Vienna Konzerthaus showed Cura's Janus-faced talents. After the intermission, Cura proved his first class, innate (conducting) abilities with a breathtaking interpretation of Rachmaninov's vigorous 'Symphony No. 2.' To summarize this enthusiastically received evening: a highly talented conductor who also sings opera for his own pleasure.*** Die Press, December 2002

Concert, Vienna: ***[Cura] proved to be a meticulous interpreter of Rachmaninov's 'Second Symphony.' Without airs and graces, with sweeping gestures and precise entries he sketched an electrifying body of sound, in which each movement was followed by frantic applause.*** Kronen Zeitung, December 2002

Concert, Vienna: ***José Cura had already led the Sinfonia Varsovia in a well-paced overture of Verdi's 'I Vespri Siciliani' and the prelude of Act II of Giordano's 'Siberia' in the first part, but after the interval he provided the true surprise of the evening: he conducted Rachmaninov's 'Second Symphony' very well, letting the music flow smoothly, phrasing beautifully. This performance was a highly professional achievement which made it clear why***

the Sinfonia Varsovia has named him principal guest conductor (after all, no less than Yehudi Menuhin was his predecessor). A performance which surpassed even CD versions under Previn or Janssons [...] Der Neue Merker, January 2003

Concert, Poland: *In describing the concert with José Cura, one cannot ignore the whole non-musical layer—the theater created around the music by the Argentinean. On one hand he draws attention to himself with his very presence and his every gesture. On the other hand, he cares for the orchestra all the time, showing with every motion that they are the most important element. Cura's concert is no doubt going to go down in as one of the most important musical events in this region, in this season. Wyborcza Gazeta, January 2002*

Concert, Sweden: *A tenor who can conduct: José Cura together with the Sinfonia Varsovia presented classical music at its best. Cura's work as a conductor was brilliant—he had the Sinfonia Varsovia eating out of his hand. The orchestra started off with Grieg's 'Peer Gynt Suite No. 1.' Rachmaninov's 'Second Symphony' made up the second part of the concert. It was a joy to see José Cura conducting this piece. The baton was abandoned and instead, he conducted with his whole body. With fingers and big sweeping arm movements, he danced with the different instruments. Again the delighted audience gave standing ovations. DD, July 2002*

Concert, Sweden: *As a tenor, José Cura has a feeling and love for the climax of the music. This he brings to the conductor's podium. He begins slow music very slowly, soft music is very soft. Cura underlines the rubati and changes in tempo. He has a sense of drama. When it is already heavy, he pours on a little more. This worked remarkably well with the orchestral pieces during the concert on Saturday evening. In the waltz in "Anitra's dans," Sinfonia Varsovia presented itself as an exquisite symphony orchestra—exact with details and radiance.*

The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly Cura's moving interpretation of Rachmaninov's powerful 'Second Symphony.' The strong adagio was a knock-out and the 1200-strong audience responded with a long standing ovation. Falun Kuriren, 29 June 2002

Cura subsequently led his orchestra in a series of highly acclaimed performances of such symphonic works as Respighi's *Pini di Roma*; he also recorded *Aurora*, a collection of opera arias, with them. Both the Rachmaninov symphony and *Aurora* are available on CD.

Rachmaninov CD: ***The first movement exposition bowls along compellingly enough to merit its full repeat here; the scherzo is as bright and articulate as the finale; and the now-clichéd lovesong contours of the slow movement retain a certain freshness.*** BBC Music Magazine

Rachmaninov CD: ***A performance you imagined but never dreamed you would experience: fast and powerful, impressive, vivacious. Great Rachmaninov playing.*** Classical Music Web

Rachmaninov CD: ***A fresh and virile Rachmaninov reading from the tenor-turned-conductor [who] has definite ideas about how the music should go.*** Gramophone

Rachmaninov CD: ***The production convinces with its passionate, highly emotional expression, its romantic exuberance, its diffuse, elevated idiom, and its directness in the communication of feelings. In the conductor one senses the "breath" of a singer in long musical phrases: ample and rich in sound-like a pleasant ecstasy.*** Salzburger Nachrichten

Rachmaninov CD: ***Cura, temporarily abandoning the stage, directs the Warsaw orchestra in a fast and powerful performance. Cura's grasp and focus is impressive; the more so in a work that has its longueurs. This performance is full of vivacious temperament and fairly***

flies along. Cura makes many telling points along the way and the fact that his foot is down on the gas pedal matters not a bit. Some might find it shockingly quick but provided you do not insist on the viscously protracted you may well find yourself wanting more Rachmaninov from Cura. Rob Barnett

Rachmaninov CD: *[Cura knows] exactly what to do with the music, and he leads an expertly shaped, urgently vital performance, as true to the spirit of the music as to the letter of the score. Listen, for example, to the sure way in which he builds the introduction, and to the feeling of a true allegro with which he imbues the first movement (with exposition repeat). His decision to take the second subject in tempo and then relax and slow down only at the cadence theme proves far more emotionally clinching than many a more indulgent treatment (and it also makes the repeat sound inevitable rather than redundant). When the big climax arrives, with crashing cymbals and bass drum, he conveys the feeling of pent-up energy being unleashed without needing to make a massive ritard that checks the music's momentum. If you love this symphony, you will certainly have to hear this surprising performance from a very unexpected source.* Classics Today

Rachmaninov CD: *One obviously need not worry about José Cura's "old-age pension:" wherever his dramatic tenor's ambitions will lead him in the future, he has begun in time to build a second career as a conductor, and he doesn't confine himself to opera. Cura's two new releases with Sinfonia Varsovia reinforce the impression that singing is his job but conducting is his true passion. And the recordings leave no doubt that he knows what he is doing. The combination of Slavic melancholy and Latin-American temperament is definitely fertile. Although the musicians bathe in emotion in Rachmaninov's 'Second Symphony,' the conductor always remains in control.* Fono Forum

Cura continued to make conducting appearances through the end of the year, including leading Sinfonia Varsovia in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9 in D minor (Choral)* during Warsaw's "Stars for Europe" series in November. The Cura magic on the podium touched musicians in other orchestras throughout the year as well, as when he led the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra in Denmark in late 2002.

Concert, Aalborg: ***José Cura is multi-talented, something fully realized in the concert from the very first number. He conducted the overture to Verdi's 'Forza del destino.' I have never heard the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra play more beautifully. Here was precision, poetry, and intense involvement. The whole concert was like this.*** BT on Line, November 2002

Cura conducted an exuberant New Year's concert in Budapest on 31 December to bring the year to a triumphant close.

In February 2003 José Cura made operatic history at the Hamburgische Staatsoper when he first conducted *Cavalleria rusticana* and then stepped on stage to sing the role of Canio in *Pagliacci*. Both conductor and singer were met with tumultuous applause and critical praise.

Opera, *Cavalleria rusticana*, Hamburg: ***Cura inspired the orchestra to give a voluptuous, sensuous performance that at times had an almost Latin flair and spirit.*** Hamburger Abendblatt, February 2003.

Opera, *Cavalleria rusticana*, Hamburg: ***Cura's approach was very clear: with firm control he had the orchestra create intense, dramatically charged musical lines and was always attentive to the needs of the singers, showing his sure feel for the sound balance between orchestra pit and stage. After this success it would be desirable to win José Cura for further engagements in Hamburg, both as a singer and a conductor of full-length operas.*** Opernglas, April 2003

A favorite guest conductor for orchestras across Europe, Cura appearances always feature intriguing programs. In the spring of 2003, he completed a series of concerts in Busseto, Verdi's hometown, where he sang all the tenor arias written by the composer and conducted all the Verdi symphonic overtures. He conducted in Munich in July and ended the summer with a unique outdoor concert in Budapest that including leading the Failoni Symphony Orchestra in such fan favorites as the "Bacchanale" from Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, "La Tregenda" from Puccini's *Le villi*, Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 1*.

Concert, Busseto: ***That José Cura owns the magic formula for sending an audience into a state of rapture was proven all too clearly the other evening in the tiny Teatro Verdi of Busseto, which was literally brimming with enthusiasm.*** Parma Gazette, May 2003

Concert, Munich: ***Cura conducted with inspiration, with vigor, with knife-edge rhythmic acuity and with a talent for showmanship.*** Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 26 July 2003

In his return to the podium with Sinfonia Varsovia on 18 September, Cura conducted Beethoven's monumental *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* as part of the VI European Festival in Jelenia Góra (Poland). Displaying an instinctive understanding of this great classical work, Cura led his orchestra through an original, electrifying and highly successful presentation. Cura next traveled to Sofia to conduct the Bulgaria Philharmonic Orchestra on 28 September in an unforgettable evening of music that included Respighi's *Pini di Roma*, Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances* and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5 in E minor*. This last work, one of the pillars of the romantic repertoire, proved to be an ideal match for Cura's passionate temperament and dramatic sensibilities. Both performances earned the conductor enthusiastic applause by appreciative audiences but it was the two symphonies (the Beethoven and Tchaikovsky), with their vastly different approaches to the central theme of fate,

that secured the Maestro wide-spread critical acclaim for his fresh vision, exciting execution and authentic voice, adding even greater luster to Cura's burgeoning reputation as a conductor of note. He followed that performance with a sold out symphonic concert in Sofia.

Concert, Sofia: ***Applause filled the sold-out auditorium in honor of the Latin American maestro as he directed the national orchestra. The program was comprised of works described by Cura as some of his favorites: 'Pini di Roma' by Ottorino Respighi, a perfect fit for his Latin temperament; the 'Symphony No. 5' by Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky; and selected pieces from 'Prince Igor' by Alexander Borodin. The Bulgarian audience rose to their feet after the final note in an ovation that lasted several minutes.*** Crónica Digital, September 2003

In October, he returned to Prague for a standing-room-only concert featuring an inspired selection of Puccini arias coupled with the *Symphony No. 9 in E minor, From the New World*, from the Czech Republic's most famous composer, Antonin Dvořák. Cura's final public concert of 2003 was in Budapest, during which the maestro led the Matáv Hungarian Symphony Orchestra in a searing rendition of the Dvořák *Symphony No. 9*, recorded live for Cura's third release under the Cuibar label.

Concert, Prague: ***In his second performance in Prague, Cura once more performed not only as an outstanding soloist, but also as an ever more frequent conductor. In front of an orchestra, in this case the Prague Chamber Philharmonic, Cura radiates an irresistible charisma, which served only to highlight his precise and clear hand movements, accompanied by an eloquent expression.*** Deniky Bohemia, October 2003

Concert, Prague: ***This was an interesting, wild and fiery Dvořák.*** IDNES, October 2003

José Cura began his conducting year of 2004 in Warsaw with Beethoven's final complete symphony, *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 (Ode to Joy)*, arguably the single greatest showpiece of Western music, incendiary and iconoclastic.

José Cura has been a strong advocate for making classical music accessible to the masses, as demonstrated in his participation in two spectacular events in early 2004. In February, Maestro Cura took up the baton to conduct Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* in Piacenza, Italy, in a unique, modern production held in a vast public exhibition hall. Designed to open the performance to the widest possible audience, Cura led his cast through the intricate drama and emotional music to earn a warm reception from both first time and experienced opera-goers.

In August, Cura took to the podium during the Veszprémfest (Hungary) to conduct the National Philharmonic Orchestra in a program including *Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18*, with Zoltán Kocsis as pianist. Cura returned to Lisbon at the end of October 2004 to headline a special evening of music for the Associação Portuguesa contra a Leucemia. Combining artistic excellence and charismatic stage presence, Cura enchanted the enthusiastic audience of thousands with his inspired conducting of Orff, Rachmaninov, and Borodin.

José Cura's star shone bright on 2 November when he hosted the *Night of Ten Tenors* at the Royal Festival Hall, London. Always a champion of emerging talent, Cura did double-duty as tenor and maestro: after demonstrating why he is considered one of the finest singers in the world, he stepped to the podium to display not only his superb conducting skills but also his innate sensitivity to the needs of his nine young soloists.

Concert, London: ***The dashing Argentinean proved himself a stylish and sympathetic master of ceremonies, giving all nine wannabes the time and space to display their wares***

in the shiniest possible light. The Observer, November 2004.

Concert, London: *Conducting, Cura made a natural accompanist and shaped orchestral phrases persuasively on what must have been minimal rehearsal.* Independent, November 2004

Cura ended 2004 with a series of highly acclaimed, sold-out concerts in Switzerland that brought audiences to their feet in thunderous applause and left critics enthusiastic.

Concert, Geneva: *There isn't a soul who can resist the impression that he has the privilege of taking part in a dialog, of being taken by the hand with warmth to be lead down the paths of all musical genres. With a gentleness that is more coaxing than disruptively overwhelming, Cura also knows how to lead, to guide the musicians with the baton. His very physical version of Dvořák's Symphony 'From the New World' leaves no room for dillydallying. The ensemble is brought into shape with a solid hand; the brio passages are sustained with strength and power.* Tribune de Genève, December 2004

Concert, Berne: *In the second part [of the concert], Cura took up the baton himself and conducted Dvořák's 'Symphony No. 9 from the New World.' Remarkable was the way in which this artist, clearly a person of comprehensive musicality, both elicited and extracted colors, contrasts and expressivity from the work. Make no mistake; this popular symphony has been played in this very hall with much less vitality, inspiration and verve. His remarkable ability surely found its finest expression in the Largo: here he proved subtlety, sensitivity and the capability to also shine an insightful light into the mysteries of the abyss, into the enigmas far below the surface of this score... Is it any wonder that the ovations took on stormy dimensions after the second half?* Berner Zeitung, December 2004

José Cura proved his versatility on the podium throughout 2005. In late spring he conducted Puccini and Rossini in Italy. In June, he conducted two sacred works at the Miskolci Opera Fesztival in Hungary: the program, which opened with the somber beauty of Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, was highlighted by conductor Cura's highly personal, daring and emotional interpretation of Kodaly's *Te Deum*. In September, Cura traveled to Plymouth, England, to conduct the Ten Tors orchestra in a spectacular Gala Opera Concert. Displaying a far-ranging taste for quality music, the Maestro led his ensemble in numbers from Rossini (*William Tell Overture*), Tchaikovsky (*Eugene Onegin*), Gershwin (selections from *Porgy and Bess*), Verdi (*I vespri Siciliani* overture), and Dvořák ("Hymn to the Moon" from *Rusalka* and the final movement from *Symphony No. 9*).

Cura returned to Italy in December for a month-long immersion in conducting, interrupted only when he raised his voice in support of charity during the annual Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. Concerts with the L'orchestra della Fondazione Arturo Toscanini in Busseto and Piacenza featured Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor* and *Symphony No. 2* and Kodaly's *Dances of Galanta*. The performances were artistic and popular successes, with Cura's 'sparkling conducting' earning ovations. He then ended the month in Mantova conducting Verdi's *I vespri Siciliani*. At the same time Cura received the Città di Piacenza - Giuseppe Verdi award for artistic range and excellence.

Concert, Piacenza: ***L'orchestra della Fondazione Arturo Toscanini was conducted by Cura with such enjoyable extroversion that he earned ovations from the Piacenza audience. Concerning the Rachmaninov piano concert the determination and "hot blood" of José Cura were appropriate for the original spirit of the score. Great energy was also present during the second half of the evening for the 'Symphony No. 2 in E minor op. 27' by the same composer. Thanks to José Cura, the audience was able to experience sparkling conducting and the stage presence of a real and proper "personality." In Piacenza,***

where the maestro and pianist granted two encores, he received yet another confirmation of his talent on the podium. Liberta, December 2005

Opera, I vespri Siciliani, Mantova: José Cura, this time in the role of conductor, commanded the orchestra with confidence, demonstrating his understanding of the elegance of the score. He didn't give in to the temptation to exaggerate, even during those moments of extreme "popular" flavor. Tempi were appropriate and the piani of the orchestra well calibrated. The excellent orchestra and choir of Toscanini Foundation responded well and the relationship between the pit and the stage turned out well balanced. Operaclick, December 2005

In 2006 Cura was tapped to lead the world-famous Vienna Opera orchestra in a spellbinding *Madame Butterfly*.

Opera, Madame Butterfly, Vienna: Something else of great importance: José Cura and the orchestra. The conductor offered up a first-rate reading of the composition and proved that the expression of sensitive, tender emotions does not need either sentimentality or sugary sweetness. The members of the orchestra were totally committed, accepted him without reservation and followed him willingly. Cura drew clear distinctions in the orchestral rendition, in that strong dramatic outbursts were followed by the most delicate and soft lyricism in the blink of an eye. To the singers he was an optimal guide and accompanist. After his singing career, the doors of a conducting career are going to be wide open for him; that much was proven. Der Neue Merker, May 2006

José Cura ended the summer months of 2007 in Cortona, Italy, at the prestigious Tuscan Sun Festival where he led the Russian National Orchestra in an evening full of gems from the Russian repertoire.

Cura continued to add conducting elements to his concert dates, as he did with an astonishing evening in Ireland in late October.

Concert, Belfast: *The opening concert of the Belfast Festival featuring José Cura will be discussed for a long time to come. The Argentinean-born tenor has won critical acclaim both as a singer and a conductor; on Friday night he entertained the crowd with his sheer excellence in both capacities. Cura's broad talents were clearly displayed in his conducting skills in works such as overture from Verdi's 'La forza del destino.'* Cura received a standing ovation from a very appreciative audience—a very memorable occasion. Well done, Belfast Festival! Irish News, October 2006

Concert, Belfast: *Cura also conducts, and took up the baton for the Prelude to Act 2 of 'Siberia,' a little-known Giordano piece. He also conducted the "Bacchanale" from Saint-Saëns' 'Samson and Dalila.'* He's a confident conductor with a kind of animal energy and terrific precision. The opening chord of the Saint-Saëns was as well placed and together as anything in the concert. Newsletter, October 2006

The 2007/2008 performance season started in September with a master class in Nancy, France, where Maestro Cura added to his growing reputation as teacher, mentor, and conductor:

Nancy Masterclass Concert: *We had the measure of this chef-d'orchestre in opera: José Cura let the orchestra breathe. Of course, the poignant motive for the father-son duet played by cellos is already opera par excellence, but it is still necessary to know how to let them sing. As for the martial crescendo, we heard it amazingly produced. In brief, José Cura made the entire overture vibrate with a theatrical sense.* Forum Opéra, September 2007

In early February, 2008, Cura took time out from his busy opera schedule to conduct Verdi's *Requiem* for the Hungarian charity Salva Vita, an organization dedicated to helping handicapped citizens gain increased independence through vocational education. He followed with another stint on the podium, conducting a symphonic concert at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin in March.

Concert, Budapest: ***The cracking noise of dilapidated chairs, mind-shaking sneezes during the intervals between the movements, tiny snorts, fidgeting, suppressed coughs were always part of every, however remarkable, production. Even if it was a masterpiece of the music literature by interpretation of any big name musician, I have not had the luck to attend a concert without these annoying distractions. On this occasion, there aren't any whatsoever. The good old Music Hall is packed to full capacity, but not even a whisper breaks the silence between the movements. Heavy, almost palpable the silence in the auditorium, before the sounds of the dark, pulsating, powerful, and passionate music chills us to the bone, and José Cura puts us completely under his spell.*** Népszava Online, February 2008

Cura started 2009 conducting in Bologna, Italy. An inspired teacher and enthusiastic supporter of young musicians, Cura then returned to the podium in February to mentor a cast of young singers through Puccini's *La rondine*, a light romantic comedy with an edge. With a compelling score filled with subtle modernistic touches and enough roles of substance to make it suitable for students, the production offered an ideal mix of seasoned, quality leadership and willing, enthusiastic performers.

Opera, *La rondine*, Bologna: ***And to prove that the youths were not sent into the fray without direction, José Cura was there to guide them vigorously from the podium (back after his recent concert in which he triumphantly led a program of American music).*** Il Giornale della Musica, Feb 2009

Opera, *La rondine*, Bologna: ***José Cura goes from the stage to the podium, adroitly showing us how it is done in regard to timing, phrasing, and atmosphere.*** La Repubblica, March 2009

Opera, *La rondine*, Bologna: ***In the orchestra was the surprising presence of José Cura, and as a conductor he surely has a future in front of him. The care with which he wraps and protects the soloists is the reason for the sustained singing. He was attentive to the rich colors that Puccini spread freely throughout this "bird" that is many times underestimated. Bravo Maestro Cura!*** La Recensione, April 2009

During summer 2009, Cura's concert in Rocca San Casciano concluded at midnight with the Romagna public in delirium, bewitched by the eclectic Argentinean tenor José Cura and the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini.

Concert, Emilia Romagna Festival: ***The generosity of the orchestra, skillfully conducted twice by José Cura, whose entire body was like a true matador of the stage, pulling out all the artistic energy of the instruments as a toreador in the arena, offered such a harmonic show that it satisfied a thousand people*** (Il Resto del Carlino, July 2009).

In November, Cura returned to Budapest to conduct Bach's *Mass in B minor*, one of the supreme achievements of classical music.

In February 2010, Cura was invited to the Budapest Opera Ball, where he sang and conducted.

Concert, Budapest Opera Ball: ***Budapest bested the Viennese in having a star of truly international stature on stage. Argentinean tenor José Cura, who is well-established in all the important opera houses of the world, presented two songs after he conducted the Opera***

Ball Orchestra. Cura, charming and gracious, cut a good Opera Ball figure. Pester Lloyd, February 2010

Cura started the new performance year in Nancy as conductor to provide the complete opera experience for young Master Class singers. As one participant, Florent Mbia, remarked, *"I was not at all expecting this and I am sublimated by this personality, and I'm telling to myself that we're having an enormous chance to have this fellow who is all at once a singer like us, a conductor and a very very great musician. That is luck. There are not many singers who will get the same chance. There are plenty of things that I've learnt, enormously, I assure you; it's not to flatter anybody or to do small talk, I assure you. Especially when it comes to the way of acting on stage, and living the music, transcending the music and then conveying something to the public, thanks to him for this."*

Cura took his baton to Estonia for the July Saaremaa Opera Days festival, where he charmed the crowd with his orchestral program.

Concert, Saaremaa Opera Days: ***In Saaremaa, the program was imaginative and atypical—Cura showed himself to be very intelligent and sophisticated, a great orchestra leader whose focus during his brief visit was on the musicians, soloists, the chorus, and, of course, his stage partner. The result: Cura had the orchestra in his hands from the beginning so they made their utmost effort for the audience, who did not skimp on the ovations. The entire program was perfect and emotional. José Cura's concert was unquestionably the concert of the year and one of our most important cultural events.*** Ekspress, August 2011

Keeping his promise to return to Nancy to present an opera for the rising artists who had participated in his master classes, Cura designed, directed, and conducted Puccini's *La rondine* to international acclaim in spring 2012.

Opera, *La rondine*, Nancy: ***Apart from early works 'Le Villi' and 'Edgar,' 'La rondine' remains the least known and least performed operas from the fully mature Giacomo Puccini, yet this was the work chosen by José Cura to lead, both as director and conductor, a troupe of young artists with whom he has had the opportunity to work in the master classes he gives each year in Lorraine, at the invitation of the Association Nancy Passion Opera. But what was most seductive about this 'Rondine' was the conducting of José Cura. He lovingly supported his singers by making sure never to drown them out. He supported them without ever lacking refinement, without a single uncalled-for affectation, without a single wrongly-placed emphasis. This was a veritable jewel of balance and subtlety, the Nancy Symphonic and Opera Orchestra visibly under his spell and rich in finesse, with the Chorus of the Opera National de Lorraine perfectly in tune.*** Resmusica, May 2012

Opera, *La rondine*, Nancy: ***The series of performances of 'La rondine' at the National Opera of Lorrain is the culmination of a project that started five years ago with master classes led by José Cura. In caring for the vocal platform, José Cura's conducting breathed with the confidence that seemed connected to the musicians of the Orchestre Symphonique de Nancy and confirmed the relevance of the project that he carried, bringing credit to the institution in Lorraine.*** ConcertCassic, May 2012

Opera, *La rondine*, Nancy: ***Argentinean tenor José Cura infuses the magnificent score with great emotion while bringing order in the confrontation of the various aesthetics. The tremendous ovation he received during curtain call was undoubtedly for this talent.*** Concertonet May 2012

Returning to the podium in January 2013 at the Teatro Massimo Bellini to open the opera season in Catania, Cura conducted Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* to rave reviews.

Opera, *Un ballo in maschera*, Catania: ***José Cura led the orchestra of our theater with firm finality plus an equal expertise in dynamics by successfully taking the measure of every minute change in tone color and expressiveness with utmost punctiliousness and precision, neither outdoing or overwhelming (perhaps because he himself is an excellent singer) the vocal performance of the singers with an intrusive and insensitive sound, nor forgetting about refinement and discretion.*** Bellini News, January 2013

Opera, *Un ballo in maschera*, Catania: ***Eight uninterrupted minutes of applause, a standing ovation for tenor Marcello Giordani, for soprano Dimitra Theodossiou, for José Cura, the conductor, and for Luca Verdone, the director. A consensus that declared Giuseppe Verdi's 'A masked ball,' which last night opened the 2013 opera season for the Bellini Theater in Catania, a success. The orchestra of the "Bellini", under the energetic and impassioned baton of such a great personality of the operatic stage as José Cura, gave its best.*** ANSA, January 2013

Opera, *Un ballo in maschera*, Catania: ***On the podium, the orchestra had José Cura, tenor of world-wide acclaim and decidedly eclectic artist. His own sensibilities, attentive to breathing and to the dynamics of the voice, indeed made for the accompaniment of the orchestra and the unfolding movements of the singers to combine in perfect harmony, both rhythmically and in the way the sound levels related to each other.*** GBOpera, February 2013

While in Catania, Maestro Cura conducted a special concert in honor of the Patron Saint of Catania, Sant'Agata. The program included works by Vincenzo Bellini, Camille Saint-Saëns, Giuseppe Verdi, Pietro Mascagni, Giacomo Puccini and songs by Gaetano Emanuel Calì and Joaquin Rodrigo.

Cura conducted in both Moscow and Antalya before heading to Budapest to support the Salva Vita Foundation, a group

dedicated to helping physically and mentally challenged young people find their way, with a concert that showcased Cura as singer, composer and conductor.

Concert, Budapest: ***José Cura's charity concert in Budapest was a memorable evening. He arrived at the Palace of Arts with one of his compositions. This song, which Cura composed for a poem by Pablo Neruda, [had] an unusually strong impact at the end of a melancholy, bittersweet, inspired and poetic song-recital on death based on Argentine folklore. José Cura could be a composer of high caliber, if he could find more time to composing. It was also interesting to watch, when he conducted the 'Misa Criolla,' how he combined the role of conductor and soloist in one person.*** Magyar Nemzet, December 2013

Concert, Budapest: ***Tickets were sold out within moments when word got out that José Cura would perform in Budapest [offering] a special Argentine evening in the Palace of Arts for Salva Vita Foundation. It was roaring success. José Cura sang and also conducted the choir and musicians standing with his back to them. His fingers were speaking. By the end of the concert everyone was filled by happiness.*** Infovilág, December 2013

In October 2014, Cura passed another landmark in his remarkable musical journey when his *Stabat Mater* premiered in České Budějovice under the baton of Mario de Rose and the discerning eye of the Maestro. Paired with Mozart's *Requiem*, the evening resounded with the mystery of birth, life and death and the spirit that binds all.

Concert, České Budějovice: ***The main "attraction" of this extraordinary concert was the attendance of world famous tenor José Cura, this time as a composer, in a large composition, 'Ecce homo,' the Stabat Mater portion of which was chosen for a premiere in South Bohemia. The theme seems to be eternal and thus timeless. The dissonance that Cura seemed concerned about, to me, were rare and expressively justified. The composition he***

wrote at 26 with a pure soul and very good theoretical foundation has an interesting meditative component and a celebratory highlight in the last "Gloria." OperaPlus, November 2014

Cura next traveled to Zabrze, Poland, where he conducted arias, operettas, songs and instrumental pieces, including *Symphonic Tango* by Astor Piazzolla, performed in Poland for the first time.

Concert, Zabrze: José Cura, returning to Poland after a long absence, arrived onstage in the Domu Muzyki i Tańca in Zabrze showing great artistic form. It is worth noting here the involvement of José Cura in conducting. Watching him lead the group I had the impression that the tenor flowed with them in the beauty of the music. The concert ended with a long standing ovation that made clear the audience did not want the artists to leave the stage. One this is certain: José Cura confirmed that he is a great artist and succeeded in creating such a relaxed atmosphere for both orchestra and audience through his personality. To Maestro José Cura: thank you for this musical feast. Presto, November 2014

Cura led his own *Magnificat*, along with *Piazzolla's Tangazo*, *Variations on Buenos Aires* and Rachmaninov's immortal *Symphony No 2 in E minor* at Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania in April 2015 before traveling to Gyor for a mixed concert featuring both song and orchestral works.

Concert, Gyor, May 2015: As Cura conducted, the orchestra soared. Whatever José Cura did, it was always honest and heartfelt. InfoVilág, May 2015

For Nowy Sącz, Cura undertook Mahler's difficult but monumental *Resurrection*, a work questioning the meaning of life and asserting the beauty of eternity. As Mahler says about the finale, "*The earth quakes, the graves burst open, the dead arise and stream on in endless procession. The trumpets of the apocalypse ring out. All is quiet and blissful. There is no*

judgment, no sinners, no just men, no great and no small; there is no punishment and no reward. A feeling of overwhelming love fills us with blissful knowledge and illuminates our existence."

Concert, Nowy Sącz: *Conductor José Cura enchanted the audience in Nowy Sącz. The Beethoven Academy Orchestra, the Polish Radio Choir, Górecki Chamber Choir and the vocalists under Cura's leadership performed Gustav Mahler's work. 'Symphony No. 2 in C minor' "Resurrection" resounding in the place best suited to it - in a church. It was a real feast for the senses. After the end of the entire symphony, the audience rewarded the artists with extended applause. It was definitely a successful and one which will remain in our memory for a long time.*
MiastoNS, May 2015

Concert, Nowy Sącz: *José Cura won the hearts of Nowy Sącz.* RDN, May 2015

Concert, Nowy Sącz: *A brilliant performance of Gustav Mahler's 'Symphony No. 2 in C minor,' conducted by world-famous Argentinean conductor and singer José Cura inaugurated in Nowy Sącz XVIII International Festival of Vocal Art Ada Sari.* Naszemiasto, May 2015

Concert, Nowy Sącz: *José Cura gave an excellent concert that aroused both admiration and great emotions. The performance of Gustav Mahler's 'Symphony No. 2 in C minor' "Resurrection," conducted by José Cura—conductor, composer, tenor, director and also showman—was very well received. Mahler's Symphony is monumental in form and sound; about 80 minutes of music performed by over 180 people. It is a work difficult to resolve, requiring great skill and knowledge from the conductor. The interpretation of José Cura delighted with its proportions and in the care taken in extracting the instrumentation of melodic lines hidden in the rich texture and dynamics. In this performance everything was as it that should be, from the huge forte to the grand*

piano, from the shattering drama to the lightness, the fun and even a smile—because, although it is a dramatic work, the last part is a musical vision of the Last Judgement that is, in fact, optimistic. A very touching interpretation. Gazetakrakowska, May 2015, Agnieszka Malatyńska-Stankiewicz

Concert, Nowy Sącz: [There was] a long standing ovation in Nowy Sącz for the artists after the opening concert of the International Festival of Vocal Art Competition Ada Sari. José Cura, conductor, composer, tenor, famous for his unconventional performances, had announced at a press conference that his interpretation of the Mahler work would be theatrical and full of emotion; indeed, the execution of this great and powerful symphony did not leave anyone indifferent. Cura's interpretation was in delightful proportions, with attention paid to extracting the richly textured melodies and instrumental dynamics. Everything was as it should be in this presentation, from the huge forte to piani, from shattering drama to lightness and fun. It was a very touching interpretation. Starosadeckie, May 2015

Following Cura's huge success with his staging of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* at Teatro Colón, the Maestro returned to the stage in his homeland as conductor in a concert offering a mix of opera and symphony.

Concert, Buenos Aires: The Rosario tenor and composer José Cura offered a surprising and unconventional concert as conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra. The multifaceted artist received a standing ovation when he arrived on stage but he was lighthearted as he presented, one by one, the singers. In the second half, Cura conducted the orchestra in a vibrant interpretation of the 'Symphony No 9,' also known as 'From the New World,' by the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák. It has been a wonderful surprise to see him conduct. He dazzled all of us with the sound he achieved in the Orchestra, which was extraordinary. It was a night of luxury. Cultura, July 2015

José Cura began his prestigious three-year artist in residence with the Prague Orchestra FOK with a program of works the he composed as settings for poems by poet Pablo Neruda.

Concert, Prague: ***There was a great success this evening at the Prague Municipal House with the musical-literary drama "If I die, Survive me!" whose author is the famous Argentinean tenor José Cura. The songs were composed on themes from the life of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. [The effort] harvested appreciative applause and expansive bravos at the end of the twenty-minute long song cycle.***
Ceske Noviny, October 2015

Conducting the Beethoven Academy Orchestra for an evening declared to have been 'an important artistic event,' Cura led a program that focused on Polish music, including Mieczysław Weinberg's *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* and Mieczysław Karłowicz's most ambitious work, *Symphony in E Minor (Rebirth)*.

Concert, Krakow: ***We witnessed an important artistic event as José Cura stood with his baton in front of the Beethoven Academy Orchestra conducting Weinberg's 'Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes,' Rachmaninov's 'Piano Concerto Number 2,' and Karłowicz's 'Rebirth Symphony.'*** Cura led the concert with his characteristic precision. This time he captured the audience, not only in demonstrating the mastery of his profession but also with his directness and sense of humor. A great artist and modest, normal person—in Cura's case, these qualities always go hand in hand. The audience warmly welcomed the execution of these works. Małopolskie Centrum Kultury SOKÓŁ, December 2015

Concert, Krakow: ***José Cura is a very efficient conductor, with expressive gestures, so the orchestra could impress with the precision of their playing. He "played" on the orchestra, doling out themes and threads, emphasizing the climaxes—in a word, he created a beautiful story of***

love, sadness, despair and hope. Beethoven Academy Orchestra rose to the heights of artistry under his hand. No wonder artists had to encore. It was a beautiful musical evening. Stowarzyszenie Muzyki Polskiej, December 2015

Cura's second concert as Resident Guest Artist in Prague was his first as conductor with them and featured an ambitious program carrying the subtext of affirmation through suffering: songs by Rachmaninov (*Vigil for mixed choir a capella op. 37*, Respighi (*Sunset*), and Cura's *Magnificat*; the second half of the concert was given over to Rachmaninov's *2nd Symphony*. The two performances were followed by a week spent mentoring the younger generation of Czech musicians when Cura held a master class focused on Italian operas for singers and conductors.

Conductor Concert, Prague: ***At Wednesday's concert in the crowded Smetana Hall, Cura appeared for the first time as a conductor with the Prague Symphony Orchestra in a successful debut. Perhaps, therefore, it was appropriate that the centerpiece of the program were vocal compositions—works by Rachmaninov, Respighi and Cura himself. In Cura's 'Magnificat,' a spiritual piece written by Cura for the birth of his first child, with soprano, the Prague Philharmonic Choir and the Jitro Children's chorus created the extraordinary success of the song. The highlight of the evening, however, proved to be the two works of Sergei Rachmaninov, in which Cura demonstrated his feel for the composer's Orthodox faith.*** Novinky, February 2016

Concert, Prague: ***José Cura, Artist in Resident of the Symphony Orchestra FOK, presented a pair of orchestral concerts this week in an unusual dual role, as both composer and conductor. Although the evening's program consisted of works by composers of the twentieth century, it was the works of a romantic nature with a spiritual touch in the first half of the concert. Framed by works of Sergei Rachmaninov, the introduction of 'Vigil for mixed***

choir a cappella op. 37' evoked an oddly serene atmosphere in the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House, which made listening to the excellent performance of the Prague Philharmonic choir literally an experience. Whether it was the impressively big sound in "Come, let us worship" or the fine work in piano in "Rejoice, O Virgin," the choir sounded at all times and in all voices beautifully balanced. Individual long phrases were full of tiny, dynamic details which amounted to music that was unusually lively and plastic. Cura used these phrases in an extra special 'stretched' way, particularly in the conclusions, which resulted in literally forcing a more focused listening. Cura's 'Magnificat' for soprano, children's chorus, mixed choir and orchestra [was a] work with the rich internal breakdown, written by the composer in 1988, after his wife had given birth to their eldest son. As a result of his success as a singer, the work remained "in the drawer" for twenty-seven years, until Cura recently returned to it. The composition requires a large cast, into which the composer cleverly worked a soprano line which is never unnecessarily covered by other voices or instruments. Interesting also was working with the actual melodies, in which Cura makes extensive use of chromaticism which makes the music special in "sliding" from one phrase to another but never quite deviating from the clear tonal center so that it was easy for listeners to follow. With the Jitro Children's Choir he added an interesting, almost mysterious character, especially in the tense moments; the orchestra brilliantly performed the musical twists and sudden pauses. Cura selected the mighty 'Symphony No 2 in E Minor, Op 27' by Sergei Rachmaninov for his conducting debut in Prague, in his own words, for one simple reason—it is everything. This extensive opus which literally pulled the composer back into life after the failure of his first symphony is the apotheosis of all that is romantic, from the initial "Largo - Allegro moderato" through the graceful "Adagio" third movement to the final "Allegro vivace." José Cura led the entire work from the first bars with an incredible inner calm so that not a single moment of the music

disappeared. The orchestra sounded with beautiful integrity, especially the truly bravura performance of the brass, the entire symphony literally flowing in a consistent stream of music, all without unnecessarily large conducting gestures. Such natural and pure musicality is indeed literally rarely heard and given the prolonged acclamation in the hall, I'm sure I wasn't the only one who experienced this exact listening sensation. Of all the previous musical experiences this season, this evening certainly ranks among the most memorable.
OperaPlus, February 2016

Cura paired his *Magnificat* with Bach's works—spanning the Baroque to the modern era—for two nights of spectacular music-making in České Budějovice before conducting *Otello* in concert (Cura also designed the staging and directed) in a 5,500 seat arena.

Opera, *Otello*, Gyor: *The performance was conducted by none other than the world-famous Argentinean opera singer, José Cura, who is also a legendary performer of the title role. In this production he not only appeared as the conductor but created the stage direction and stage design. When José Cura appeared, the whole Arena fell into silence... holding our breath so as not to disturb the concentration. Then José Cura raised his baton and began to do magic. The storm arrived to the stage and the notes of the storm were resounded by the orchestra. After the last closing notes of the frenetic performance, an incredible ovation and burst of applause broke out in the auditorium. When José Cura came to bow at the curtain call, it was not enough for the people to produce loudness with their hands but they also started to stomp on the ground with their feet, too.* SZK, April, 2016

In July, Cura did triple duty at the Dubrovnik Festival: he opened the event as conductor in a wide-ranging symphonic concert, followed that as tenor in a gala concert, and finished the week as a photographer with an exhibition of his work: *Espontáneas*.

Innovation and invention has been a key ingredient in José Cura's conducting programs. Before a sold-out audience in Prague in a concert in support of UNICEF, Cura introduced bold Latino colors and rhythms paired with the energy of youth to create an evening of music that set the audience dancing in their seats.

Concert, Prague: *The Prague audience was enchanted. Cura is the resident artist for FOK and in addition to his singing and conducting duties, he managed to devise a program of mostly South American music from the 20th century that completely filled the Smetana Hall. Although Cura prepared everything, he offered a surprise to the audience: with a single European work on the program, Ravel's 'Bolero,' Cura invited a young drummer to the podium and then sat among the audience as the drummer led the orchestra for the entire piece while playing, mastered to perfection. A complete 'congress of drummers' was featured in the final work of the evening, with the Czech premiere of the film music for 'Night of the Mayas' by Mexican Silvestre Revueltas. During this beguiling performance the FOK had help from several students from the Prague Conservatory who coped with the rhythmically and dynamically challenging parts impeccably, as did the FOK in this different and unknown piece.* Novinky, December 2016

Cura closed out his conducting year when he helped celebrate the Symphony Orchestra Julià Carbonell (OJC) Terres de Lleida 15th anniversary with a full program of works by Barber, Piazzola and Dvorak.

Concert, Lleida: *José Cura takes the 'New World Symphony' and tells you: this is not Brahms! It's American. It's dance; it's swing! The second movement was sensational, with virtuosity in the woods and a neatness in the exciting final chords. Cura did a wonderful job. The strings warmed with Barber's 'Adagio' (my God!) and the entire orchestra, playing a beautiful Piazzolla tango, did what Piazzolla's*

music always does: make you fall in love with it. What a wonderful concert! Segre, December 2016

Cura returned to the Czech Republic in March for another sold-out concert; this time, the constantly evolving Maestro brought with him his oratorio *Ecce Homo* as a gift to the Prague audience which ***“has adored him since his first singing concerts here years ago.”*** (Novinsky) Conductor Cura selected two lesser known works—the intimate *Gymnopédie* by Frenchman Erik Satie with orchestration by Debussy and an especially impressive *Church Windows* from the Italian Ottorino Respighi.

Concert, Prague: ***The Argentinean singer, conductor and composer José Cura selected Prague as the site of the world premiere of his oratorio ‘Ecce Homo.’ On Wednesday and Thursday the [audience] in the sold-out Smetana Hall in the Municipal House witnessed two evenings where Cura excelled in all areas of his activity. Now approaching Easter, when the theme of the Passion of Christ is again being musically illustrated with famous works from the past, the new take by Cura will certainly take a place of honor among them. Cura focuses on the last moments before the crucifixion of Christ and his death, but instead of the traditional glorification he uses these moments to reveal the human Jesus Christ. Overall, Cura’s musical language was traditional and understandable, using knowledge of Gregorian chant, a lot of percussion instruments, some of which were placed in the balcony, so that the idea of crying and pain was perfect. The lyrics come mainly from the Psalms and the Stabat Mater. The audience response was tremendous and especially for Cura who, as the composer, earned a double standing ovation.*** Novinsky, March 2017

Ariel Ramírez is one of the most important Argentinean composers; his two most famous works—*Misa Criolla* and *Navidad Nuestra*—are intended for a folk group incorporating indigenous instruments, but Ramírez himself expressed to Cura many years ago his hope that the works

would one day be developed into vocal symphonic works. In October, Cura introduced his version to the world in Prague, coupling it with the world premiere of his own work, *Modus*.

Concert, Prague: *Argentinean singer, conductor, and composer José Cura twice offered a program of the same listening gems from the Argentinean composer Ariel Ramirez. 'Misa Criolla' and 'Navidad Nuestra' were featured in the premier of Cura's symphonic adaption and with Cura serving as soloist. The two other works of the evening, Cura's 'Modus' and 'Concierto de Aranjuez' by Spaniard Joaquin Rodrigo, so that the opening of Cura's third year as a resident artist at FOK was at the highest level. Cura began with the premiere of his choral variation 'Modus.' This demanding, albeit short, piece with its medieval Gregorian choral-like structure was presented in a demonstration of the wide range from the Middle Ages to the present. After the break, Cura ceded his conducting podium to his compatriot Mario de Rose, and in the world premiere of Cura's orchestrations of both Ramirez's works he excited the audience as the soloist. Cura, who personally knew the composer, was given his permission to adapt the work from the chamber, folkloric version to a larger one for orchestra and choir. He did so masterfully—he kept a lot of drums and guitar and replaced others with similar sounds, as the charango with violins sul ponticello. In the last part of 'Navidad Nuestra,' Cura used the original Argentine chaucha or rattles. The audience's response was great and the performers repeatedly celebrated.* Novinky, October 2017

Concert, Prague: *Colorful, lively, exotic—all that was expressed yesterday evening. Symphony Orchestra of the Czech Republic City of Prague FOK, together with its resident artist José Cura and the Prague Philharmonic Choir, prepared a program that was not a typical concept of classical music orchestras. The opening was the premiere of Cura's 'Modus' with chorus, followed by the famous 'Concierto de Aranjuez' and then ending with the premieres of the symphonic versions of Ariel Ramirez's*

'Misa Criolla' and 'Navidad Nuestra.' 'Modus,' a work for chorus and orchestra, was inspired by medieval Prague; the main idea was the use of a Kyrie from the tenth century. Cura worked with a slow increase in tension, achieved by layering and gradually increasing the sound. This is a most interesting piece: a simple introduction, where the Kyrie is first heard during the long harvest in the string worked mystically. It followed a progression through a dynamic climax and a subsequent simple ending. In the Rodrigo concerto, the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK created a brilliant atmosphere with good dynamics, never losing its lightness. I approached the symphonic version of 'Misa Criolla' and 'Navidad Nuestra' with skepticism; folk instruments have been an inseparable part of both works, lending them authenticity and charm—it would be inappropriate to remove them. José Cura, however, orchestrated the two works with extraordinary respect for the original, without significant interventions in the composition, and the symphonic version supported everything that was most important. In Cura's version of 'Miss Criolla,' some instruments remained, the plucked instruments were wittily replaced with those the players grabbed and played on like guitars. Cura never slipped with an inexperienced pen (as a composer), and his performance remained earnest and sincere. A Christmas story set in an Argentine environment—such is the narrative of 'Navidad Nuestra.' It has six parts (the Annunciation, Nativity, Shepherds, Wandering, Three kings, Escape) which, like the previous number, correspond to Argentine dance. Again, it was a vigorous and soulful performance in which the choir, the soloist and the orchestra were well understood. There was nothing else to expect from the Argentinean Maestro. Opera Plus, October 2017

Cura conducted a concert of impressionistic compositions in Prague and a concert of his own works in Budapest in March.

Concert, Prague: *Resident Artist of the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK* José Cura helped the orchestra paint on

wide, impressionist canvases. He started with Debussy's monstrous 'Sunken Cathedral' [and] closed the evening with 'Pictures at an Exhibit' by Modest Mussorgsky based on paintings by Viktor Hartmann. It was a colorful evening. Cura had set up an excellent program that reminded us that this year is the centenary of Claude Debussy's death, beginning with the 'Sunken Cathedral,' orchestrated by Leopold Stokowski. The majestic music completely filled Smetana Hall, yet in spite of its magnitude, it was played with feeling, slowly changing individual lines, floating in transparent harmony. This was an unusually spectacular piece to start the concert. With the 'Pictures at the Exhibition' by Mussorgsky, José Cura was able to create powerful musical images, with a full palette of colors, with the orchestra playing with dense, wide, sometimes romantic sound. Everything was presented in a sensitive tempo, uncommonly detailed. The evening ended with the "Great Gate of Kiev" with the sound of glorified fanfare, in escalating emotions and indescribable musical energy, using all the colors and their shades. I'm sure not a single one was missed.

OperaPlus, March 2018

Concert, Prague: *The FOK presented José Cura as conductor at today's concert in Prague's Municipal House. In a crowded Smetana Hall, he played a concert in honor Claude Debussy; "Pictures at an Exhibit" by Modest Mussorgsky was heard as a counterpoint. The energetic Cura and the Orchestra received huge ovations.* Ceske Noviny, March 2018
