

José Cura the Singer in Opera

(1978 - 2018)

40 years of stage life

*The Argentinian José Cura represents the
great hope of modern opera.*

Herald Sun, 21 February 1996

For music lovers, it is a rare treat to come across a singer whose distinctive voice is instantly and indelibly lodged in one's memory, an actor whose presence on stage breathes fresh life into tired characters, a man whose vision and integrity set him apart from the rest. Such an artist is José Cura.



1978

2018

Born in Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina, on 5 December 1962, José Cura's musical talent matured quickly: at 12 he was playing guitar under Juan di Lorenzo's guidance; at 15 he debuted as a choral director; and at 16 he began studies in composition with Carlos Castro and piano with Zulma Cabrera. In 1982, he ente-

red the Escuela Superior de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Rosario to continue his musical education; the following year he became assistant conductor for the university choir. At 21, he won a grant to study at Instituto Superior de Arte del Teatro Colón. Cura continued to sing in the school chorus while focusing on composition and conducting until 1988, when he began working with Horacio Amauri to develop his singing technique.

1991 – 1993

Determined to make a career in opera, José Cura moved to Italy in 1991. In Milan, he met tenor Vittorio Terranova, under whose authority Cura polished his Italian singing style. In February 1992 he made his debut in Verona as the Father in Henze's *Pollicino* and as Principe Mediano in Paolo Arca's *La gatta bianca*, two children's operas. In Genoa he played Le Remendado in Bizet's *Carmen* and the Capitano dei ballestrieri in Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. But it was in Trieste in March 1993 where he sang his first leading role, starring as Jan in the Trieste production of Bibalo's *Signorina Giulia*.

La Signorina Giulia, Trieste 1993: ***Jan, the servant, perfidious and cynical, was the young Argentinian tenor José Cura, extraordinary as a singer-actor.*** Trieste Oggi, April 1993

In the same year, he made his debut in the Straus operetta, *Sogno d'un Valzer (Ein waltzertraum)*, also in Trieste, and attracted attention for his performance as Albert Gregor in Janacek's *The Makropoulos Case*, in Turin.

1994

On the way to stardom

Cura began 1994 with a series of highly successful debuts: Ismaele in Verdi's *Nabucco* in Genoa and Don Alvaro in Verdi's *La forza del destino* in Turin were followed with Ruggero in the world premiere of the third version of Puccini's *La rondine* (also in Turin) and Roberto in the same composer's rarely per-

formed first opera, *Le Villi* (in Martina Franca); the latter performance is particularly noteworthy for providing Cura's first complete opera recording.

La rondine, Turin: ***The future looks bright for the Argentinian tenor José Cura, who has a lyrical voice with brilliant top notes. The role showed off his considerable stage presence.*** Opera, 1994

Le Villi, Martina Franca: ***The Argentinian tenor José Cura, a truly great performer with a vocal instrument beyond the common, very strong and expressive, imposed himself in the role of the main character, showing that he is an authentic spinto-drammatico tenor, a register today quite rare. Cura, besides a big and beautiful voice, has the stage power of a true actor.*** l Quotidiano, August 1994

In November, he made his US debut in Chicago as Loris Ipanov in Giordano's *Fedora*, opposite Mirella Freni; he subsequently reprised the role in Trieste in 1995, in London in 1996, in Vienna in 1997 and 1998, and in Tokyo, Zurich and Lecce, Italy, in 1998. This last production, with Katia Ricciarelli as Fedora, was recorded live and released on CD.

Fedora, Chicago: ***May God bless the mother that gave you birth.*** Éxito, December 1994

1995

José Cura continued to add roles to his expanding repertoire in 1995. In February, he returned to Italy to star as Paolo il Bello in the Palermo production of Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini*. In June Cura debuted in London's Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in the title role of *Stiffelio* on the opening night of the Verdi Festival.

Stiffelio, London: ***What made last night particularly thrilling was the Opera House debut performance of Argentinian tenor, José Cura, in the title role. His Stiffelio sucks the audien-***

ce into a personality festering with piety, priggishness, hypocrisy, and irrepressible rage. Evening Standard, June 1995

Stiffelio, London: ***The Argentinian tenor is tall and imposing of stature, and the top of his voice is thrillingly free and secure. He has a nice line in flashing eyes and flaring nostrils, and neatly suggested the man's fundamentalist smugness in the early scenes. Above all there is an elemental power to his stage persona which is well suited to the role.*** The Times, June 1995

Stiffelio, London: ***[Cura is] a real tenore di forza, with a commanding stage presence and an unusually dark, burnished timbre, burgeoning unexpectedly into a brilliant ringing top. Cura is a real find, an Otello in waiting.*** Independent, June 1995

In July he sang his first Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at the Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago. That September he made his first appearance on stage in Paris in the Opéra Bastille's production of *Nabucco* and in November, he starred in *Fedora* at Covent Garden.

Nabucco, Paris: ***The fascination arrives with the Argentinian José Cura, a Latin-burning Ismaele. This brilliant tenor, easy and natural, has a golden career ahead of him.*** Tribune de Genève, September 1995

Fedora, London: ***Cura is a superb actor, a convincing-looking hero and an intelligent, spontaneous and gifted musician. I have no doubt that Cura, with his unusually distinctive sound and equally abundant talent, will also rise to the dreaded super-tenor status as special hero by appointment to the cognoscenti.*** Evening Standard, November 1995

Fedora, London: ***His touching portrait of Ipanov is matched all the way in this lavishly hypnotic revival by the superb performance of Maria Guleghina in the title role.*** Evening Standard, December 1995

Fedora, London: ***Cura has a vivid stage presence and shrewd dramatic intelligence which he used to add convincing dig-***

nity and warmth to an essentially two-dimensional character. He also has a voice of real distinction—dry, slightly metallic, not always refined, but ardent and authentically heroic, with ringing top notes. Ian Brunskill, November 1995

1996

In 1996, Cura built upon his burgeoning reputation and solidified his position as one of the most promising tenors of his generation. Following his portrayal of Osaka in Mascagni's allegorical opera *Iris* at the Rome Opera in January (available on CD), he returned to London to star in Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, a role for which he has continued to receive universal acclaim throughout his career. For his debuts in Los Angeles and San Francisco, Cura added two roles to his repertoire, Pollione in Bellini's *Norma* and Don José in Bizet's *Carmen*.

Iris, Rome: ***Daniela Dessi and José Cura, the Argentinian tenor who already displays the color and style of spinto singing that hasn't been heard in quite some time, are excellent as Iris and Osaka, two roles which are by no means easy.*** El Pais, January 1966

Iris, Rome: ***The sights and sounds and the emphasis on imagination of all married with an understanding that rarely occurs: in my own case, this 'Iris' by Hugo de Ana will remain one of the most important events in my lifetime. And there was the personality of José Cura, with a sometimes unevenness of tone but with the rare and solid timbre of a lyric tenor.*** Corriere della Sera, January 1996

Samson et Dalila, London: ***The young Argentinian never seems to put a foot wrong. His Samson is full of soul; a commanding and vibrant tenor performance that captures the Hebrew leader's weaknesses with as much theatrical devotion as his god-like strengths.*** Evening Standard, January 1996

Samson et Dalila, London: ***The great thing is that he does sing softly, much of the erotic charge of the second act was the***

result of his sensitive caressing of the vocal lines. The Times, January 1996

Samson et Dalila, London: ***There's superbly musical singing from the Samson of José Cura; with a handsome, firm, incisive sound, Cura also makes a powerful presence on stage. The audience was ecstatic.*** Independent on Sunday, February 1996

Samson et Dalila, London: ***José Cura adds to his growing reputation and repertoire of roles with a charismatic and sexy Samson. He generates a powerful intensity and flashes enough calf and thigh to convince he is capable not only of leading the Israelites but of inflaming Dalila's heart. His ardent and sensitive singing movingly projects Samson's anguished soul. "Vois ma misère" (Act III) was heartrending.*** The Stage, February 1996

Norma, Los Angeles: ***And yet it is because of a tenor that fans will be clamoring for tickets for 'Norma,' if not for any other reason than to say that they saw José Cura then. The young Argentinian, making his local debut Thursday, has been singing professionally for only a few years. But Cura has it all. He has that special presence that causes you to never stop noticing him when he is on stage. He is exceptionally good-looking and could easily suit popular television or film. He sings with a firmness of voice that is smooth across the registers yet commandingly virile. His pitches are dead-on. He gives each phrase a natural musical shape, he can act, and it surely doesn't hurt that he happens to be a conductor and composer. Best of all, Cura proved an ensemble player of the most noble sort, doing nothing to upstage the performance only enhance it.*** Los Angeles Times, September 1996

Norma, Los Angeles: ***It was José Cura, as Pollione, with his breezy strutting, his chiseled gold coin looks, and his silvery incandescent voice, who announced the arrival of a huge new talent.*** Downtown News, September 1996

Norma, Los Angeles: ***As for José Cura, the Argentinian tenor singing the less important role of Pollione, the Roman pro-consul who spurns Norma for Adalgisa, word of him has***

traveled quickly. A magnificent singer, he is now the undisputed star of the show. Los Angeles Times, September 1996

Carmen, San Francisco: ***Blessed with dashing good looks and a dancer's presence, the young Argentinian tenor made a riveting impression. If his technique is a little reckless, the thrill of the voice is undeniable. Best of all was Cura's touching, natural way with Bizet's music. He has a sort of storytelling ease that has been rare among tenors since World War II, the phrasing of a Schipa or even a Gigli.*** San Francisco Chronicle, October 1996

Carmen, San Francisco: ***José Cura, whose Pollione strongly impressed me some weeks ago in Los Angeles, gives an incredibly strong account of Don José. This is an earth-shattering first appearance thanks to a solid stage power (spontaneity, desire, anguish, without forgetting his emotional intensity, the spectacular paroxysm in Carmen's Act IV) and also thanks to his voice which has a beautiful timbre, reliable projection, is well-focused and expressive.*** Opera International, February 1997

After performances in Verdi's *Il corsaro* in Turin and Puccini's *Tosca* in London, Cura traveled to Melbourne and Sydney to take part in the *Puccini Spectacular*, a show specifically developed for his Australian debut.

Il corsaro, Turin: ***Corrado, Il corsaro, is the Argentinian José Cura, who has today's finest dramatic tenor voice (maybe the only one...?)*** La Stampa, February 1996

Il corsaro, Turin: ***The Argentinian tenor possesses a special voice, one decidedly out-of-the-ordinary. It is a voice that has a particular timbre: male, fiery, with sensual variations. It has a dark center but brightens as it climbs. It is not large but big enough to meet the requirements of the score. In addition, the Corsair in Turin possesses the physique of the role. As a captive, tied to the trunk of a large tree, naked from the waist up, with a powerful and athletic body, appropriately lit, this crucial scene is stunning. He has the allure of a film star and provides the answer to the requirement for an image that has become urgent in today's ope-***

ra. As an actor he has instinct, credibility, and charm. But the young Cura has another card to play: he has the momentum, the impetuosity, and the boldness that Corrado demands. He has all the elements needed to express the iconoclastic anger that is the distinctive characteristic of the Byronic hero, so imbued with the spirit of the romantic. Opera-Click, February 1996

Il corsaro, London: Cura [sang] with a properly Byronic mixture of energy and sensitivity. The beautiful dungeon scene, an oasis of calm amid all the swagger, went especially well—it is always good to hear tenor singing softly and sweetly. The Times, March 1996

Il corsaro, London: When a sick tenor (for whom apologies are made) sounds appreciably better than those in good health around him, then you're in big trouble. José Cura was that tenor, captain of the corsairs, heroically buckling his swash while discreetly expectorating into a ready handkerchief. He has quite a following among the Covent Garden cognoscenti—a tall, swarthy figure with a voice to match. The color of that voice—grainy, dark-hued—is arresting. He should work on his legato and leave the trumpeting to look after themselves. But thank heavens for him. He alone sounded like he had any business on this stage—with or without the scenery. Independent, 20 June 1996

Tosca, London: The young Argentinian super-tenor-to-be has already made two immensely impressive Covent Garden role debuts this season, first as Ipanov in the gripping revival of 'Fedora' and more recently as Samson in Saint-Saëns' opera. Cura's performances are always profoundly moving, expertly paced, and vividly acted; his Cavaradossi is no exception. Evening Standard, April 1996

Tosca, London: José Cura, the Argentinian tenor, has been taking on new roles and new composers for the ROH at an exceptional rate. Puccini's Cavaradossi is the latest and he sings the painter with strong, burnished tones now expected of him. Cura manages very well the gentle phrases of memories and hopes in Act III. But the victory cries of the middle

act suggest that the heroic repertory will be his forte, in every sense of the word. The Times, April 1996

Tosca, London: ***The Argentinian José Cura represents the great hope of modern opera.*** Herald Sun, 21 February 1996

Other key roles added in 1996 include *Le Villi*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* and Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* at Opernhaus Zurich, Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* at the Ravenna Festival (conducted by Riccardo Muti, directed by Liliana Cavani and broadcast on Italian television), and *Pagliacci* at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw (conducted by Riccardo Chailly and broadcast on Dutch television). In December, he starred in the Puccini segment of the *BBC Great Composers* documentary, telecast in December 1996.

Cavalleria rusticana, Turin: ***If you wanted to present the work of Mascagni in the best possible way, this occasion captured it in full and was a huge success. With confidences exchanged almost in the ear, emotions were contained and retained. And in a magnificent plot twist, Turiddu's farewell was pronounced in mezza voce, with him stunned and terrified, unable to stand, determined to die rather than to kill. In the lyrical intensity and dramatic liveliness, 'Cavalleria' has never felt so vivid. José Cura draws a bold and youthful Turiddu, with a beautiful voice and wonderful presence. This was an overwhelming success, and naturally will become the performance that will remain the point of reference.*** La Repubblica, July 1966

Cavalleria rusticana, Turin: ***This 'Cavalleria rusticana' represents one of the most expressive and virtuosic results we have ever seen. The towering passions, the loving momentum, but also the invincible attraction to death; the immensity of jealousy, revenge, superstitious antagonism, and yet also bordering on sweetness in the environment and religious sentiment, all this makes the erotic and murderous madness of the protagonists even more devastating. Emphasized to an almost inhuman emotional intensity, like a jolt of electricity that leaves us stunned, overwhelmed, defeated. José Cura's Turiddu was outspoken and lively. Success was an understatement; it was raining flowers and the***

entire auditorium was standing. Corriere della Sera, July 1966

Cavalleria rusticana, Turin: ***The 'Cavalleria' of 1996 in particular sticks in my mind for the mingled self-doubt and animal magnetism of the Turiddu, a newcomer named José Cura.*** Opera News, Coda, April 2015

1997

Cura's debut at Milan's La Scala came in January 1997, when he starred as Enzo in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. Cura returned to La Scala in June 1998 as Des Grieux in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (televised and recorded for CD and DVD) and again in February 1999 for *La forza del destino*, both conducted by Riccardo Muti.

La Gioconda, Milan: The tenor José Cura surpassed the test. His timbre is authentic, his squillo true. Corriere della Sera, January 1997

Manon Lescaut, Milan: (DVD) *Taped on the stage of La Scala in June 1998, this Manon Lescaut represents old-fashioned theatre at its best. Very few companies have the serious money needed for such opulent, realistic productions. The pairing of Maria Guleghina (Manon Lescaut) and José Cura (Des Grieux) is felicitous, catching both in excellent vocal estate. There is good chemistry between them, and sparks fly. Highly recommended.* La Scena Muscale, Spring 2006

Manon Lescaut, Milan: (DVD) *Poised to inherit the mantle and the juicy operatic roles of the Three Tenors, José Cura has been subject to intense scrutiny. Does he have the vocal goods to match the pretty face and dashing figure? This live recording of Puccini's 'Manon Lescaut,' recorded at La Scala in 1998, offers promising evidence. As the young student Des Grieux, Cura's presence is charismatic from the start, blossoming into a passionate rendition of the famous Act I tenor aria, "Donna non vidi mai." It's been noted that Cura's voice leans toward a darker, almost baritonal range, but while his top notes don't ring out á la Pavarotti, they're re-*

sonant enough to convince you that his future as an audience-pleasing heartthrob is both secure and deserved. Editorial Review, Barnes and Nobles

Manon Lescaut, Milan: (DVD) ***This particular representation of the opera has just about everything going for it. The production, filmed at La Scala in 1998, is a lavish period staging with costumes as beautiful as museum pieces, and sets which bring the story vividly to life. But even more important are the leads. One could hardly imagine a more handsome Des Grieux than José Cura—a picture-book lead. Neither (leads) gives a cookie-cutter performance, and these are not cookie-cutter voices. Cura's tenor sounds more like a baritone with (great) high notes. I have no doubt that when Puccini sat down at his desk to write 'Manon Lescaut' and pictured the scenes of the opera, he must have imagined them very much like this.*** Opera Today, October 2005

Manon Lescaut, Milan: (DVD) ***José Cura, as Des Grieux, is in fine voice, colorful and ardent. His singing with Guleghina (their voices blending so well) ravishes the ear especially in their tempestuous Act II duets and in the intensity of their Act IV duet as Manon dies in the arms of a distraught Des Grieux.*** MusicWeb International, December 2005

With a growing international reputation and increased critical interest, José Cura made a pivotal career decision in 1997: at Turin's Teatro Regio, at age 34, Cura debuted in Verdi's *Otello*, telecast live on Italian television. Under the baton of Claudio Abbado, Cura offered a bold, brash, brilliant Moor, carefully pieced together through literary and historical study, musical exploration and psychological analysis—all hallmarks of the painstaking preparation José Cura continues to bring to the role development. Audience and critics alike were riveted by his unconventional but compelling characterization; *La Nazione* ran the headline “*José Cura: a new Otello is born!*” Opera houses around the world agreed, offering Cura the opportunity to take his Moor to London, Washington, Madrid, Trieste, Munich, Buenos Aires, Nice, Paris, Vienna, Zurich, Warsaw, Tokyo, and Florence. His presence in this role is an invitation to the extraordinary, making him one of the most eagerly sought-after *Otello* of his generation.

Otello, Turin: ***This stalwart Argentinian tenor, with an impeccable accent, with a dark, suave vocal timber, also possesses a musical discipline without a doubt rare among his colleagues, was as last a "real Otello:" he recalls with intelligence the best of earlier singers but with a communication ability and personality that easily enables one to predict a long and great career for him.*** La Nazione, May 1997

Following the phenomenal success of his *Otello* debut, Cura starred in *Cavalleria rusticana* in Bologna, *Tosca* in Torre del Lago, *Fedora* in Vienna, and in an acclaimed *Samson et Dalila* in Turin. He made his first appearance as leading man at the Arena di Verona in summer of 1997 in *Carmen*.

Samson et Dalila, Turin: ***Cura confirms himself to be the only possibly imaginable performer for Samson since Jon Vickers's retirement.*** Opera International, 1997

Samson et Dalila, Turin: ***One cannot deny that the Argentinian tenor gives an equally handsome and impressive vocal delivery hallmarked by mature expressivity. The color of the voice is that already familiar to us, dark and burnished, but at the same time and when needed rounded and soft. He is bravissimo in the third act, singing with great participation through very refined interpretation, all of which conveys the physical and spiritual suffering of Samson.*** L'Opera, 1997

Samson et Dalila, Turin: ***José Cura is fantastic. His powerful voice is able to create an atmosphere of introspective self-confession, while the timbre darkens to express the bitterness of a man who recognizes he has betrayed himself and been betrayed.*** Avvenire, October 1997

Samson et Dalila, Turin: ***Cura fascinated his audience with his brilliant voice, with its ample tone, perfect intonation and his powerful stage presence. As Samson, the singer-actor Cura cannot be beaten.*** Opernglas, December 1997

1998

Aida was added to Cura's repertoire in January 1998 when he played Radames in Japan. He was subsequently invited to inaugurate the newly refurbished Teatro Massimo di Palermo singing the role in April. In February, he starred in a concert version of *Andrea Chénier* at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

Andrea Chénier, London: ***Cura also has one or two traditional, rather endearing tenorial mannerisms, like tying one phrase to the next to show off his breath control, and approaching top notes via a springboard about a third down, then hitting the target with ejaculatory triumph. The audience went wild.*** The Times, February 1998

Andrea Chénier, London: ***His voice rings out powerfully, but he has the ability and taste to curb the volume when restraint is called for, as in "Come un bel dì di maggio." He is the real thing.*** Electronic Telegraph, March 1998

Andrea Chénier, London: ***The role of Chénier is tailor-made for him: there is something viscerally exciting about his platform presence.*** Opera, May 1998

Andrea Chénier, London: ***Riding on the crest of his new-found reputation as the latest "fourth tenor," [Cura's] poet/patriot stood tall and swarthy, a tenorial colossus. There's an athleticism, an air of sport about his singing which is, of course, in the great tradition of tenor stylists, while his musicianship is apparent in long phrases such as those that grace his second act aria, "Credo a una possanza arcane."*** Independent, February 1998

Andrea Chénier, London: ***José Cura's dark, burnished tenor shaped Chénier's music with such impassioned fervor that he brought the house down.*** The Stage, 12 March

Aida, Palermo: ***On the night of Palermo's musical resurrection the true hero of Aida, monumental but restrained, was José Cura.*** Corriere della Sera, April 1998

During the summer concert season, Cura brought his Don José to the Barbican Theater in London for a concert presentation that entranced audiences and had critics reaching hard for superlatives to capture the performance.

Carmen, London: ***This was Bizet confined to the concert platform. But Sunday's 'Carmen' carried a fire and finesse that outclassed many a staging hung with all the trappings of a Seville the composer never visited. José Cura [was] careful to develop his José gradually and not give away too much too early. His tenor is fast developing baritone qualities and Cura uses them to powerful effect, making José end as a go-red bull, tormented beyond endurance. Behold the humble prototype of the Otello that Cura is about to sing around the world.*** The Times, July 1998

Carmen, London: ***The only unproblematic element was José Cura's José, getting the applause that befits someone on his way from the wings to center-stage as reigning Italian-style tenor. He didn't try to portray José as a psychopath, a notion which has to be imported into the part. Rather he remained the mother's boy with a surging libido, and insofar as there was any team to collaborate with, he was the ideal member.*** The Spectator, July 1998

Cura returned to the Verdi repertoire for *La forza del destino* in Marseilles and *Don Carlo* in Japan. In November he appeared at the Washington Opera as Samson after recording the role on CD, with Olga Borodina as Dalila, in July under the direction of Colin Davis. Cura concluded the year with a remarkable Luigi in a televised concert version of Puccini's *Il tabarro* at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

La forza del destino, Marseille: ***The big winner of the night in 'La forza del destino' was the Argentinian tenor José Cura, a young Alvaro of brilliant and valiant voice, who did not hesitate to sing the duet "Solenne in questora" stretched out on his back. Marseille's Opera was also witness to his admirable version of "O tu che in seno agli angeli," which earned him a great ovation.*** Opera, July 1998

Samson et Dalila, Washington: *There can be no denying that this is a young singer with extraordinary gifts-combining a full, ringing and powerful tenor voice (complete with marked baritonal shadings and just a hint of the trumpet) with a commanding and athletic stage presence of the aria "Vois ma misere" was sufficient to prove that Cura's singing is more than merely loud and that he is capable of some ravishing legato phrasing.* Washington Post, November 1998

Samson et Dalila, Washington: *Ever since Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo and José Carreras turned into a novelty act playing football stadiums the hunt has been on for the next big tenor. One of the strongest claimants is José Cura, a 35-year-old Argentine bringing down the house (and the set) in Saint-Saëns' 'Samson et Dalila' this month at the Washington Opera. A kung-fu black belt and bodybuilder, he looks the part of Samson. Better yet, he sings it. Thrilling at full throttle, as any Italianate tenor must be, Cura is even more impressive as a lyrical voice in his love duet with Denyce Graves, the Dalila of the Washington production. The surest measure of his artistry, however, is his nuance vocalism and tragic characterization of the blinded Samson.* Richmond Times-Dispatch, November 1998

1999

Firmly entrenched as one of the great modern voices, in 1999 José Cura sang *Otello* in concert in London at the Barbican, returned to Paris for *Carmen*, Milan for *La forza del destino* and Verona for *Aida* (the first time an opera was broadcast live over the internet). The year ended superbly, with his debuts at New York's Metropolitan Opera in *Cavalleria rusticana* as only the second tenor in the Met's history to make his house debut on opening night (the other having been Caruso in 1902) and at Madrid's Teatro Real in *Otello*.

Carmen, Paris: *José as José is obviously the major asset of this reprise at the Bastille. At the premiere, there was evidence, in the large voice, rich in the middle, the slightly*

sharp but powerful high notes and the generous phrasing, of this electric presence. ConcertoNet, January 1999

La forza del destino, Milan: ***Mr. Cura gave a shattering portrayal of his strange character, so honor-bound, so prone to self-abasement, so fierce of temper. He probed especially deep in the haunting battlefield duet, "Solenne in quest'ora". Mr. Cura gave the gloomy opening phrases an unearthly lightness, as if his soul were already hovering at the mystic threshold, but in the serene melody that follows, he let the light go out, steeping in solemnity a moment more conventionally played for the false comforts of nostalgia.*** New York Times, February 1999

Otello, London: ***He impressed me greatly. His strong, dark, steady tenor lacks colour, but he uses it with musicality and intelligence. There was no recourse to bellowing, and the quiet intensity of "Dio mi poveti" and "Niun mi tema" was drawn with real sensibility.*** The Times, May 1999

Otello, London: ***José Cura's concert performance of Otello must be one of the most passionate and focused pieces of music/drama in London at the moment. He has a voice teetering on the verge of breathtaking greatness and a mesmerizing stage presence.*** Metro Live, May 1999

Otello, London: ***The tenor Jose Cura left no doubt that it was his show, with a swank and swagger off the Richter scale. But then he does have an amazing platform presence. It's early in his career for him to be tackling so heavy a role as Otello (something most tenors of his type hold back for later), but it was mostly there. What he couldn't do, he faked with vigour; and by Act II, when he'd stopped crooning and had acquired more definition, he was stunning.*** The Independent May 1999

Cavalleria rusticana, New York: ***Cura appeared in Mascagni's 'Cavalleria rusticana,' a big wet sponge of an opera in which spasmodic arias lurch from sob to sob. It's difficult to gauge an artist's finesse in such a rough-hewn score, but there was no question that Cura commanded the house. His dark, thickly sinewed tenor—a baritone in disguise—lent itself well to***

Mascagni's hearty sentimentality and to the role of the brash philanderer. He had energy, power and—never underestimate this—a macho stride. All Edition, September 1999

Cavalleria rusticana, New York: Cura, stocky and handsome at 37, presents a picture of swaggering masculinity and commands a voice to match: a clear, focused tenor that carries well, rings nicely at the top and generates considerable emotional heat. His Turiddu stood up to the weight of his powerhouse co-star, soprano Dolora Zajick, and even when he was required to dash about the stage during a very busy drinking song, he maintained his stamina. Attractive tenors don't come along every day, and Cura promises to be around for a while. New York Post, September 1999

Cavalleria rusticana, New York: Cura, a figure of distinct stage presence, seemed to have absorbed Turiddu's character, feeling how such a macho youth would behave and express himself—his guilt tinted with bravado and vice versa. The voice, dramatically shaded, has a nice burr to it, with overtones of both menace and sensuality, well suited to freewheeling verismo. Opera News, December 1999

Cavalleria rusticana, New York: The evening's number-one star, José Cura, the Argentine heartthrob, is an excellent singer. He is thought of as "The Next Plácido" but merely as Cura he'll do well enough. His big aria, "Addio alla madre," which is so easy to make risible, is a jolting surprise: it is understated, strangely quiet, well-paced, unhysterical, almost subdued—making it all the more effective. What's more, Cura is a competent actor, at times verging on mesmerizing, with a minimum of staginess. The operatic public is made for this tenor, and properly so. New York Press, September 1999

Otello, Madrid: José Cura has a color of voice, dark and noble, very adapted for the role; his singing volume is sufficient and his appearance fits very well with a vision of a youthful and vigorous mercenary who is passionately in love with his Desdemona. El Mundo, November 1999

2000

In 2000, José Cura sang Otello in Washington and Munich, starred as Alfredo in *La traviata à Paris* a groundbreaking production staged in authentic Paris settings while being telecast live around the world (available on CD and DVD), and was Don José in the Ravenna Festival production of *Carmen*.

Otello, Washington: ***'Otello' is a vehicle that requires a big star to carry it off. José Cura is that kind of star.*** Washington Times, March 2000

Otello, Washington: ***Cura has the stamina, the acting ability and the voice to meet these challenges. His Otello is multi-dimensional—both a heartbroken wimp and a maniac. When Desdemona betrays him, he writhes like a crushed worm. But when he glares at his enemies, bellowing and spitting, you can almost smell the gamey aroma of a gladiatorial arena.*** The Globe and Mail, March 2000

Otello, Munich: ***It must be admitted that the local public has become suspicious about the "publicity machine" mentality of the major record companies. Then came Otello's "Esultate!" and one could feel the electricity run through the audience. Cura, a stunning figure of a Moor, linked phrases (no breath between "l'ira immensa" and "vien quest'immenso amor!"), soared as the music moved upward and intoned the final "Venere splende" immaculately while lying on his back, his head in Desdemona's lap. The evening moved from one superb scène to the next, with Cura gaining in intensity until his passion totally engulfed the audience. He seems willing to sacrifice tonal beauty for dramatic fervency. His epileptic fit was as credible as his jealous outbursts, and his vocal mastery of the fiendish part was awe-inspiring.*** Opera News, 2000

La traviata à Paris: As Alfredo, Cura proves again that there is no more exciting young tenor on the scene today. His dashing looks and heroic timbre, the impulsive thrust of his singing and his attention to words come together in a com-

plex portrait of a man caught in a maelstrom of emotion.
San Francisco Chronicle, August 2000

La traviata à Paris: ***The Argentinian tenor Jose Cura was a convincing Alfredo.*** New York Times, June 2000

Carmen, Ravenna: ***This was the best performance I have yet seen from Cura, with wonderfully spontaneous reactions, showing quite a talent for comedy in Act I. Vocally, Cura injected desperate passion in the voice, almost bursting with a sexual sob, as he sang "Carmen," when he gives into his passion. The "Flower Song" was performed as a sweet and impassioned plea, with lyricism and sensitivity of phrasing.***
Opera Now, November/December 2000

In December he sang Manrico in *Il trovatore* at the Teatro Real. That year he also sang Cavaradossi in two spectacular outdoor productions of *Tosca*, at the Temple of Baalbeck, Lebanon and in Bari, Italy.

Il trovatore, Madrid: ***Garcia Navarro's musical understanding and interpretation corresponded extremely well with that of the singers, particularly with José Cura's. This exceptional singer represented the exact opposite of a singer suffering from an image neurosis, standing close to the orchestra pit, belting out top notes at the top of his lungs. Cura took pains sticking to the score; top notes were not held excessively and there was no shouting. Instead, the tenor excelled in his variably-nuanced, logical, and at times surprisingly baritone color of voice, in well-considered differentiations as well as in his involved, passionate acting. A near perfect choice for this role.*** Das Opernglas, February 2001

2001

In 2001 José Cura appeared in numerous special performances and opera productions honoring the Centenary of Verdi's death, including *Otello* at the Wiener Staatsoper on 27 January (the date of Verdi's death), Paris' Theatre du Chatelet, London's Covent Garden, Trieste's Teatro Verdi and Zurich's Opernhaus.

He sang in performances of *Aida* in Greece and Japan and created a memorable Don Carlo in Zurich. Cura also surprised the audience at the Gran Teatro del Liceu when he substituted for an ill José Carreras in *Samson et Dalila*—to audience delight and critical approval.

Samson et Dalila, Barcelona: *Cura sang Samson—a role he knows perfectly—with spirit, guts, and a taut and vibrant voice which gave to his character a dramatic force that corresponded to the action on the stage. Few times have we heard the sad monologue of the mill-turning sung more emotionally, dramatically, and movingly than from Cura. Then, in the Bacchanal, his performance was immense, without neglecting the vocal demands: he thrust himself into the crowd, rolled towards the ground in his knot of chains, and rose up to bring down the pillars of the blazing temple with a high note that sent the audience into delirium.* Vanguardia, March 2001

Otello, Paris: *Cura gave notice from his initial entrance that he is a serious contender for greatness in this role of roles.* Opera News, July 2001

Otello, London: *Cura wins hands down on musical talent alone. The sound is dark and thrilling, his delivery ballsy and impactive.* The Guardian, March 2001

Otello, London: *In exceptional vocal shape, the Argentinian tenor establishes himself as a reference point in this role.* Opera International, August 2001

Otello, London: *Cura combines absolutely commanding stage presence with sturdy technical ability, and his sumptuously huge baritone tenor evokes all the darkness and tragedy of the man cruelly played by fate and the villainous trickery. Cura draws the audience in as he spirals inexorably downwards from noble soldier to wretched murderer and his final scene is genuinely moving. To evoke this in an audience whilst delivering a musically sound and vocally brilliant performance is truly impressive and Cura's role debut at the ROH is nothing short of a triumph.* AudioStreet, April 2001

Otello, London: *"Esultate" was near ideal: fearlessly secure, confidently phrased, altogether imposing. Cura is the Otello of today and tomorrow... his timbre is as handsome as his appearance.* Opera, July 2001

Otello, London: *José Cura is a primal Otello, an emotional time bomb whose triggering unleashes unnerving mood swings between dangerous stillness and crazed anguish.* The Stage, April 2001

Otello, London: *José Cura is a phenomenally gifted artist: seldom can anyone have made the hideously difficult title role sound so easy to sing, or so rewarding in pure vocal terms.* The Times, April 2001

Otello, London: *José Cura has a voice teetering on the verge of breathtaking greatness and a mesmerizing stage presence.* Metro Live, April 2001

Otello, Trieste: *Cura returned last night in the full glory of his artistic and vocal efficiency, which let him show us an Otello that was not only moving but tormented. Perfect as an actor, Cura moved us with his beautiful, suave voice.* Il Giornale della Musica, August 2001

Otello, Trieste: *José Cura, who in addition to his recognized vocal skills is an excellent actor, made a literate Otello, without shouts or theatricalities, solidly constructed. Cura's Otello is, really, a great creation.* La Vanguardia, August 2001

Otello, Zurich: *This is a complete Otello, in his tenderness, in his wildness, in his blindness. And for each of these feelings, José Cura finds the true suitable vocal expression from a cry to a silent weep. Excellent.* Zurichsee Zeitung, September 2001

Otello, Zurich: *Thanks to his enormous presence on stage, Cura could impress; his Otello is hard to beat vocally. Although he sings this most trying of all Verdi tenor roles with comparative lyricism, Cura's dramatic outbursts are easy and convincing. The intensity and emotional depth he can give to his virile timbre were amply demonstrated on this*

unsuccessful opening night with his superb “Ora per sempre” and “Niun mi tema.” Opernglass, November 2001

Don Carlo, Zurich: *Elbows held tight against his torso, he portrayed Carlo as an introspective neurotic, an unloved child doomed from birth, baring his soul with his first words “Io l’ho perduta” in the burnish glow of his voice. It was hard to resist his proud vocal thrust, and he caressed phrases eloquently, especially in the insinuatingly sung soft passages.* Opera News, May 2001

Don Carlo, Zurich: *A dreamer, an idealist: in Zürich, it’s Don Carlo, who in his self-destructive infatuation is nothing of the hero; Carlo and Flanders and freedom are as far away as Elisabeth is near. José Cura makes this melancholy, delusional, confused anti-hero in his role debut extremely expressive. He vocally maintains not only his often-heard dramatic forte but also sings the role in a discriminating, effortless, and perceptive style.* Rodoni, January 2001

2002

Cura continued his stellar run of Verdi productions into 2002, when he starred as Manrico in the ROH production of *Il trovatore* (available on DVD), reprised *Otello* in Zurich, and brought his Moor to Warsaw for a special, one-time-only performance.

Il trovatore, London: *Cura’s Manrico was an outstanding achievement, technically unimpeachable (he crowned “Di quella pira” with a couple of formidable top Cs) and often elegant. Taking all four phrases of “Riposa, o madre” in the final scene in one breath not once but twice is going beyond the call of tenorial duty. Such diligence helped him create a character of alternate bravado and lassitude, a romantic hero doomed from the start to failure and ignominious death.* Opera News, August 2002

Il trovatore, London: (DVD) *Elijah Moshinsky’s production is surely as lively and moving as Verdi’s intricate masterpiece deserves. José Cura sizzles....This new ‘Trovatore’ DVD is a*

reminder that not every golden age happened long ago. San Francisco Chronicle, 2003

Il trovatore, London: (DVD) ***Musically, Carlo Rizzi is an energizing conductor, and his cast boasts José Cura's complex and vocally articulate view of Manrico. Four Stars.*** BBC Magazine, February 2003

Il trovatore, London: (DVD) ***All four are in excellent voice. Cura supports Naef with beautiful quiet singing... There are two other filmed 'Trovatores' available at present. For a combination of musical excellence and intelligent production neither comes close to this one.*** International Record Review

Il trovatore, London: (DVD) ***José Cura is excellent. The sound is vivid and the production lavish overall. This is an excellent 'Il trovatore,' with a stellar cast.*** Classical Net

He also appeared in Tokyo in *Tosca*, Vienna in *Pagliacci*, and London in *Samson et Dalila* in a concert version at the Barbican Centre under the baton of Sir Colin Davis.

Pagliacci, Vienna: ***In the role of Canio, Cura put emphasis not on superficial brilliance but on a subtle and sophisticated interpretation of the title role, and in that he offered an exemplary model of vocal and dramatic excellence.*** Die Presse, January 2002

Pagliacci, Vienna: ***Cura is intense, versatile. Dynamically and dramatically he turns the comedy into tragedy; the burnished splendor of the high notes is accompanied by instances in which Cura develops the vocal line veristically.*** Der Standard, January 2002

Pagliacci, Vienna: ***José Cura, as the passionately jealous Canio who ultimately runs amok, offered a gripping portrait, whose believable intensity the audience couldn't escape.*** Wiener Zeitung, January 2002

Tosca, Tokyo: ***Brutally questioned, bleeding, languishing in jail, dragged to the shooting-ground, "Beau" Cura rendered***

his role with the utmost refinement, both vocally and in his acting, thus reaping a most deserved acclaim—to say nothing of the repeated "bravos" at such climactic moments as "E lucevan le stelle," with its sobbing finale: the most enjoyable 'Tosca' to be heard or seen during the last decade.
Classics Today, June 2002

Samson et Dalila, London: ***The way his voice filled and thrilled the hall will be an abiding memory.*** The Mail on Sunday, December 2002

Samson et Dalila, London: ***The role is taken by the most carnal of tenors, José Cura, who plays Samson as a feral creature, barely in control of his emotions. You have a real treat in store.*** The Guardian, December 2002

2003

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

Operas performed in early 2003 included *Otello* (Tokyo), *Don Carlo* (Zurich) and *Tosca* (Vienna). In June, Cura debuted as Calaf in the Arena di Verona production of Puccini's opera, *Turandot*; critical and popular acclaim was instant and overwhelming as Cura triumphantly took his place among a handful of active tenors able to negotiate this vocally challenging role.

Turandot, Verona: ***José Cura fills up the Arena with three words, "all'alba vincerò," like a challenge to the entire world, singing supine, with the attitude and the pride of an ancient Roman.*** Il Corriere della sera, June 2003

Turandot, Verona: ***José Cura sings an impeccable Calaf and in "Nessun dorma" a high B which others can only dream of.*** Kurier, June 2003

Turandot, Verona: ***Sometimes, all you want to say about an evening at the opera is "Wow!" As Calaf, José Cura's charisma shone from the start, with the size of venue seemingly a perfect match for this great artist. His melodious vocals, with beautifully held top notes, were expertly controlled. "Nessun dorma" was fresh and true, sung with charm and ease, rather than as a challenge or with gusto, as is often the case.*** Opera Now, September 2003

Turning to the French repertoire, Cura also presented his passionate and dangerous Don José in a one-time performance of *Carmen* at the Arena, followed by a gala, semi-staged performance of *La traviata* that left the arena audience on their feet, demanding more. He also found time for a one-night only special appearance at Maggio Musicale Fiorentino as Otello

Carmen, Verona: ***It must be said bluntly that the Rosario tenor José Cura (Don José), for whom the audience applauded so strongly that he encored the 'Flower Song,' did a magnificent job, deploying a well-covered voice, a strong lyrical 'spinto,' that was harsh or imploring depending on circumstance.*** Diario La Prensa, July 2003

Otello, Florence: ***The Maggio Musicale Fiorentino closed with a production of Verdi's masterpiece, one to forget from the point of view of the direction; a personal triumph, however, for José Cura, who undertook the role of the Moor for only one evening between two performances of 'Turandot' at the Arena di Verona. His stage presence and his vocal authority, of an undeniable timbre and dramatic impact, have made his Otello one of the most sought after today, and he is an absolute protagonist who is able to attract all attention to himself.*** L'Opera, July/August 2003

After the summer, Cura added a new role to his repertoire at the Wiener Staatsoper as the prophet Jean in Massenet's rarely performed *Hérodiade*: from his powerful entrance at the end of Act I through his moving duet with Salome in Act IV, Cura's sensitive reading of the role illuminated his character with passion, conviction, and insight. His vocal performance—ranging from the beautifully intimate tones used in dialogue with Salome through the soaring brilliance of the high notes employed

as the messenger of God—coupled with his consummate acting skills and commanding stage presence earned Cura thunderous applause.

Hérodiade, Vienna: *Cura was able to score with his immaculate yet radiantly sparkling upper register.* Kurier, September 2003

Hérodiade, Vienna: *Cheered, of course, José Cura, who, in his debut of this role, portrayed John as more of a spiritual prophet than a French operatic hero. Vocally, he showed complete mastery of all registers, from the baritonal touch up to the highest notes, performing each and every piece with superior ease.* Kronen Zeitung, September 2003

Hérodiade, Vienna: *José Cura, singing Jean, was announced as indisposed on this occasion [but] gave a very well nuanced reading. Indeed, his farewell to life, "Adieu, vains regrets," was superbly shaped and voiced.* Opera News, December 2003

Hérodiade, Vienna: *Cura seemed at ease as Jean, both vocally and in his depiction of the character's psychology. His was an almost intimate interpretation, without shouting and exaltation, but with some beautiful mezze voci. He outlined very well the conflict Jean finds himself, torn between his faithfulness to God and his physical attraction toward the woman. The passaggio to the upper register is always the same, strangely produced, but very uniquely personal. I believe that he is one of those personalities in today's opera scene who, cast in the appropriate parts, can reach a very high artistic level. Ovations for all the singers, in particular for Cura.* Operaclick, September 2003

In November, Cura returned to the Verdi repertoire to reprise his role of Don Carlo and Alfredo in *La traviata*, both in Zurich.

Don Carlo, Zurich: *With a stage presence and commitment that are staggering, José Cura is marvelous as he plays this character, this Don Carlo, who is eaten alive by doubt, who is weakened by the spasms that torment him and who is often huddled on the ground, notably when Eboli or his father*

hurl their worst denunciation at him. Vocally, the Argentinian tenor displays brilliant form, from start to finish of the performance with notably clear, luminous high notes. Concertonet, November 2003

Don Carlo, Zurich: Another great singing performance comes from the title character, José Cura. [His] Carlo suffers from epilepsy and nervous weakness and it is strange to see how the soul suffers in such a strong, muscular body. The sound, however, is so beautiful, so striking that the viewer has personal and convincing evidence that this man is really a great singer. NSZ, November 2003

At the end of 2003 and stretching into January 2004, José Cura proved once more to be the indisputable Samson of his generation: in December (2003) and January (2004) he made his much anticipated and highly successful return to the US, starring in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of Samson et Dalila.

Samson et Dalila, Chicago: With Cura exploiting his tenor's darker weight, Samson emerged as both a thoughtful servant of God and a headstrong warrior. A sexy-looking hunk in his short tunic, he was a magnetic figure in the opening scene, a natural leader whose stirring call to arms galvanized the dispirited Jews. Eschewing cartoonish strutting and gestures for more understated intensity, Cura's Samson was a believable young hero from his first entrance. Chicago Tribune, December 2003

Samson et Dalila, Chicago: Cura was a powerful, subtle, ultimately profoundly moving leader of the Israelites. He has the volume, the dark good looks, the sense of stagecraft and the massive physique of a body-builder. In the first scene of the final act, pushing a millstone, he made Samson's anguish heartbreaking and he lifted himself in the temple scene to the final note that brings down the house—literally. A noble, courageous portrayal. Not for a moment does this Samson et Dalila flag; rather, the full measure of its decadence, sensuality, betrayal and triumph resounds with clarion call. News-Chronicle, December 2003

Samson et Dalila, Chicago: *The Argentine tenor mustered the heroic timbre and dramatic declamation needed to get him through this demanding French tenor role. He aptly conveyed Samson's Tannhäuser-like struggle between faith and the flesh. His most intense and poignant singing came in "Vois ma misere," when the blinded, shackled captive despairingly cried out to God.* American Record Review, Spring 2004

Samson et Dalila, Chicago: *Cura unleashed torrents of ringing heroic tone within a dramatic conception that remained convincing. His voice seemed to gain power through the evening, yet he maintained the necessary control for some delicate pianissimos in the opening of Act III. This is an exciting performer who here provided a wealth of visceral thrill.* Opera News, March 2004

Samson et Dalila, Chicago: *José Cura, the tall, dark, handsome Argentine tenor, has been on everybody's list of the longed-for "Fourth Tenor" since emerging on stage in the early 1990s. Mercifully, the sillier aspects of that near-desperate early hype have died down a little, allowing Cura's phenomenally rich, flexible tenor voice and stage presence time and space to blossom naturally. Saturday night, he was, both vocally and in terms of acting, the kind of sexy, noble Biblical warrior opera lovers dream about. With Cura exploiting his tenor's darker weight, Samson emerged as both a thoughtful servant of God and a headstrong warrior. He was a magnetic figure in the opening scene, a natural leader whose stirring call to arms galvanized the dispirited Jews. Eschewing cartoonish strutting and gestures for more understated intensity, Cura's Samson was a believable young hero from his first entrance. That intensity turned the Act II love scene into a titanic struggle worthy of both its Biblical authors and Saint-Saëns' gorgeously crafted score. Cura's Samson was acutely aware of his weakness for Dalila and the danger his liaison posed for his people. But the ultimately disastrous clash of his passion with the savilly deployed tears, caresses and curses of Dalila was as riveting to watch as an impending train wreck. Highly recommended.* Chicago Tribune, December 2003

Samson et Dalila, Chicago: *Smoldering at the center of the Lyric production was José Cura. The Argentinian tenor was last seen here in 1994, a promising young talent in 'Fedora.' Cura returns an international star in what has become a signature role for him, and with good reason. He unleashed torrents of ringing heroic tone within a dramatic conception that remained convincing, from the eroticism of the Dalila interludes to the poignant connection with the child in the final scenes. His voice seemed to gain power through the evening, yet he maintained the necessary control for some delicate pianissimos in the opening of Act III. This is an exciting performer who here provided a wealth of visceral thrill.* Opera News, March 2004

2004

In March 2004 José Cura reprised the role of Samson at the Royal Opera Covent Garden.

Samson et Dalila, London: *Argentinian José Cura, arguably the most gifted spinto tenor of his generation, is sturdy and handsome as the Israelite champion.* The Stage, March 2004

Samson et Dalila, London: *His Samson is at once a sensualist and a fanatic, a man in whom desire and spiritual conviction burn with equal, violent intensity. He responds to [Dalila's] seductions with honeyed whispers and captures Samson's mental and physical agony with frightening vividness in the closing scenes.* The Guardian, March 2004

Samson et Dalila, London: *The Argentinian José Cura ranks as one of the world's top Samsons. Large and muscular, he looks ready to topple any old temple and moves with the sass of one who knows as much his remorseful Act III aria, when shorn and eyeless in Gaza he turns the mill, had real force.* Evening Standard, March 2004

Samson et Dalila, London: *José Cura is a very strong Samson: his dark tenor is in good shape with a ringing power, and he is an actor of fearless physicality.* Times, March 2004

Samson et Dalila, London: ***In this incarnation, Cura is wholly convincing, even moving during the treadmill scene, edging me reluctantly towards a rare use of that dodgy critical word 'definitive.'*** The Observer, March 2004

Samson et Dalila, London: ***Act 3 opens with Samson alone, chained to the mill wheel. Here Cura was on tremendous form. His strong performance was a striking contribution to the evening. He gave a wonderful variety of tone color, as he had done throughout the opera, and he made a profoundly moving figure. Cura's final contribution, bringing with it the collapse of the Philistine temple, brought the evening to a triumphant close.*** Music and Vision, March 2004

Cura, known for his unconventional approach to creating memorable operatic characters, portrayed an intensely personal Andrea Chénier in Vienna and triumphed as Dick Johnson in Puccini's *La fanciulla del west* in Zurich.

La fanciulla del west, Zurich: ***Cura displays unquestionable charisma as the repentant outlaw, and his voice enchants in its valor, the luminosity of its timbre and the ease with which it reaches the highest notes.*** Concertonet, May 2004

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. In May, he traveled to Seoul for several performances of *Carmen*, held in an outdoor arena seating 37,000 spectators and performed on a 120 meter long stage outfitted with a video screen, Cura thrilled the audience as the obsessive Don José, a role long recognized as one of his most compelling and realistically rendered.

Cura finished the 2003/2004 opera season with a splendid *Otello* in Hamburg and a rousing *Carmen* in Warsaw.

In September 2004, José Cura returned to Zurich for a revival of *Otello*, followed by the house premiere of *Stiffelio*. In the title

role, Cura presented a powerful portrait of a man in crisis. This was Cura at his finest: Stiffelio's struggles with his wife's infidelity and the murder committed by his father-in-law were evident in every note, every look, every movement. With a voice both heroic and defeated in turn, Cura portrayed Stiffelio as a man divided: one of God, emotionally closed to those who love him while in pursuit of perfect faith; and one of flesh, devastated by betrayal and consumed with anger. Cura, always exploring the psychological make-up of his character, offered an intelligent, insightful performance executed with finesse.

Stiffelio, Zurich: ***In José Cura's portrayal of Stiffelio, one can observe the conflict of emotions, a conflict between vindictiveness and reconciliation, worked out carefully by Verdi. Especially in the 'piani', Cura finds incredibly beautiful colors and a great vividness.*** NZZ, September 2004

Stiffelio, Zurich: ***As Stiffelio, tenor José Cura demonstrates the full range of nuances from pastoral depth to ardent virility not only by being perfect in appearance, but also in voice.*** Tagblatt der Stadt Zürich, September 2004

Stiffelio, Zurich: ***Stiffelio is at the center of the opera, sung superbly by José Cura. As an actor, the tenor has a strong stage presence in personifying the inner conflicts of his character. From his dark tenor of almost baritone timbre, he manages to elicit surprisingly velvety colors and shadings.*** Neue Luzerner Zeitung, September 2004

Stiffelio, Zurich: ***With great, intense commitment both singing and acting, tenor José Cura offers up a Stiffelio who should be able to forgive another human being, but who instead is boiling with jealousy and ire. Cura sings with a voice capable of developing and displaying immense power.*** Thurgauer Zeitung, September 2004

Stiffelio, Zurich: ***In this Zurich production, nobody, with one exception, found any really workable solutions to the challenges. The exception? His name is José Cura. The Argentine tenor was the only one who really breathed life into his character; the only one who was capable of creating intensity***

and credibility, of portraying a real human being with real conflicts. Zürichsee Zeitung, September 2004

Stiffelio, Zurich: ***Verdi imagined that Stiffelio would sound like "a great silver plate struck with a silver hammer"; Cura's timbre is more akin to a bronze tocsin. He has a visceral, chest-oriented ferocity, and there is certainly no lack of heft or vigor to his sound. One could wish for more subtlety in his delivery of the words and a smoother spinning of the musical lines, but his delineation of the character's dilemma, torn between his fundamentalist morals and his intense sexual jealousy, was very impressive indeed. Some Stiffelios I have seen in previous productions could not escape a certain sanctimony; Cura created an unusual and most effective character with his almost unbridled sexiness. Lina must have been desperately frustrated by this Stiffelio's absence to have fallen for the bland playboy charms of Raffaele.*** Opera News, December 2004

José Cura returned to Vienna in November and December 2004 in three startlingly different roles: he first created an explosive, dangerous Stiffelio; then his flesh and blood Canio became the terrifying reincarnation of a worn-down man pushed to desperate acts of violence; and finally his sensitive, idealistic Andrea Chénier proved a beacon of sanity in a world gone mad through personal nobility, dignity and courage.

Stiffelio, Vienna: ***Cura acts and sings, absolutely glorious and radiant in the upper notes, so passionately, he's almost frightening.*** Kurier, November 2004

Stiffelio, Vienna: ***The audience received enthusiastically the captivating José Cura with his precise study, his acutely drawn sketch of the clergyman torn between jealousy, desire for revenge, and faith-based forgiveness. His tenor has become a bit harsher, but the power of his ability to give shape to the character vocally is even more intense and disciplined in its effect. And impressive evening.*** Kronen Zeitung, November 2004

Andrea Chénier, Vienna: ***This effervescent hormone hydrant named José Cura serenades the marvels of poetry with tenor***

rial ardor and heart rending top notes. Wiener Zeitung, December 2004

Andrea Chénier, Vienna: ***Cura enriches this worn Otto Schenk production because he acts with a degree of passion and devotion that we know from few other singers. To be sure, there are greater and more elegant voices, but in the totality of his presence, Cura is excellent, first-class.*** Kurier, December 2004

Andrea Chénier, Vienna: ***He provides sold-out houses, delights his admirers around the world and is considered one of the best tenors of his generation: when the Argentinian José Cura stands on stage anywhere, frenetic jubilation is inevitable. So it is at the Vienna State Opera, where Cura has now debuted as Umberto Giordano's Andrea Chénier. No doubt Cura knows what he owes his fans: large gestures, a little poetry, many high notes and a good deal of theatricality.*** Kurier, February 2004

2005

Cura opened calendar year 2005 with a concert-version of *Il corsaro* in Barcelona followed with *Samson et Dalila* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Il corsaro, Barcelona: ***Cura opts for a direct and visceral approach, one taking advantage of the strength of his voice with its resounding center, its dark color, its attractiveness, its great dramatic appeal. A straightforward Corrado, thrilling without filigrees, greatly applauded by the public.*** El País, February 2005

Il corsaro, Barcelona: ***José Cura, sang the role with energy and power, completing his first aria with enormous effectiveness. He performs with all the requirements of a Verdian opera of the "primitive" type, such as 'Corsaro': energy, emotional intensity and security.*** La Vanguardia, February 2005

Il corsaro, Barcelona: *In the production at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, where regrettably the work was not staged, the vocal cast did justice to the score. In the starring role of the Corsair, we had the pleasure of enjoying the powerful voice of José Cura, who made a good beginning with his cavatina and offered a vigorous and energetic performance of the character. To his intense vocal performance he delivered theatrical expressivity. His success was overwhelming.* Crítica musical catalana, February 2005

Il corsaro, Barcelona: *The protagonist was the tenor José Cura, who sang his role with skill, giving with his voice the beautiful colors of a lírico-spinto, the voice required for a hero who has to alternate between fierceness and tenderness.* Opera, January 2005

Samson et Dalila, New York: *José Cura's Samson is the big news of the revival. Clearly a solid musician, he sang with rhythmic integrity and admirable dynamic shadings. Still, it was sheer vocal willpower and dramatic risk-taking that gave his portrayal such impact. During the love scene, he sang Samson's climactic top notes lying on his back with Mrs. Graves cuddled over his chest. In the prison scene, when Samson, blinded, shorn of hair and sapped of power, turns the mill wheel to which he is chained, Mr. Cura captured the pitiable state of this broken man through his halting steps and anguished singing.* New York Times, April 2005

Samson et Dalila, New York: *Cura is an exciting singer who breathes both life and thought into a character. He immersed himself in the role, putting to expressive use the arresting rough edges of his full-throated sound. When he rose at the last moment to find himself again, the resurgence of his strength was palpable.* Opera News, May 2005

Samson et Dalila, New York: *Samson is a real hero of this opera and José Cura was the main attraction in these performances. His Samson is a charismatic Israelite leader, a warrior as well as Dalila's former lover. The beginning of Act III was the most dramatic, impressive and convincing moment of this staging. The captured, betrayed, shorn and blinded Samson turns the millstone, shackled to it. His aria*

"Vois ma misere, hélas!" was one of the strongest moments in the opera. Cura is not only an extraordinary vocalist but thanks to his experience as a conductor and a universal musician, he's a rare example of a thinking tenor. That's something! Kamerton, April 2005

In spring 2005, Cura focused on portraying Canio in Berlin and Piacenza in two very different productions.

Pagliacci, Berlin: ***Truly impossible to ignore, José Cura with his voice of the century, a voice that comes along only once in a hundred years. It reminds of fanfares, the trumpet flourishes of Judgment Day.*** Berliner Morgenpost, April 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: ***José Cura, who in addition to possessing an exquisitely controlled and big voice also has a breathtaking stage presence, shaped his "Vesti la giubba" with an intensity that went far beyond the usual macho-kitsch-sobbing caused by betrayal and jealousy, and lent to the character of Pagliaccio unexpected depth, significance, almost something "Faust-like."*** F.A.Z., April 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: ***Cura breaks the rule. There is something about his vocal organ that surpasses, transcends the average, run-of-the-mill power voice. The way he takes the passaggio from middle to upper register in his desperation aria is as hard and fast as Schumacher stepping on the gas pedal of his red Ferrari in a curve.*** Berlin Zeitung, April 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: ***Cura starts to work magic immediately: From shrill laughter, he plunges into tears and lamentation, pulls himself up to soar with a tearjerker of a melody, and then tops that with, how could you miss it?, a brilliant, daringly sustained "firecracker" of a high note. Bravo, Don José.*** Der Tagespiegel, April 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: ***As the jealous clown Canio, Cura delivers his top notes with lingering relish. He is scorchingly intense in the dressing-room aria, and a smoldering presence the rest of the time.*** Bloomberg, April 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: *The Pagliaccio was Caruso's signature role but once you hear Cura, you don't need Caruso.* HNA, April 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: *In addition to the sensual, unmistakable color of his voice, the sheer power of his delivery, and his radiant top notes, Cura once again impressed with the absolute ease of his vocal performance.* Das Opernglas, June 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: *José Cura's performance was characterized with remarkable expressiveness and explosives high notes.* Opéra, June 2005

Pagliacci, Berlin: *José Cura possesses a phenomenal voice. His first appearance on a Berlin stage is fit for a true star—he enters the stage in style at the beginning of 'Pagliacci:' in a black limousine—an elegant Beau who hurls out his greeting powerfully, while constantly attacking Tonio and maltreating his wife. He displays so much superiority that his later despair seems surprising. But the way he expresses these feelings vocally is absolutely terrific. He used his warm-timbre voice, which can also shine on high notes, to great effect.* Der Neue Merker, May 2005

Pagliacci, Piacenza: *Tenor José Cura asserts himself totally in 'Pagliacci' and he is a complete success. Vocally dazzling, an actor of extraordinary effectiveness, the Argentinian singer got a genuine 'standing ovation' at the end as confirmation of his superlative performance.* La Cronaca, May 2005

Pagliacci, Piacenza: *José Cura was the star here, a Canio deluxe in a vibrant, ringing, heart-felt performance; with a mellow, fully rounded voice that was agile and showed interesting accentuation, beautiful phrasing and flaring bursts in the height.* La Discussione, May 2005

Pagliacci, Piacenza: *José Cura was the absolute star, above all because of the irresistible on-stage charisma which enabled him to interpret and define a character that drew attention like a magnet whenever he came on stage. But the singer was in no way second to the actor. In this repertoire, Cura has a means of showcasing the somewhat dark beauty of his*

timbre as well as the amplitude of his voice, articulated in throbbing and passionate phrasings that nail the listener. Where the flashes of tempered steel were made to sparkle, they sparked wild applause and frenetic calls for encores.
Libertà, May 2005

In June, Cura returned to Verona as Radames for two performances of *Aida*, in a Franco Zeffirelli production. In July, he traveled to Munich for two performances of *Otello* as part of the record-setting 2005 Münchner Opern-Festspiele.

Aida, Verona: José Cura is a reckless genius [whose] Radames convinces utterly in recitation and interpretation. Cura is a wonderful actor, intelligent, a connoisseur of interpretation.
OperaClick, June 2005

Otello, Munich: As Otello, José Cura unveiled the study of a man so consumed by jealousy that he actually lapsed into a terrifying insanity. The way he dealt with Iago time and again, the way he doubled over on the ground at the end of Act III, the way he struggled to control his bouts of aggression, face buried in his hands in sheer despair, the manner in which he made his rapidly progressing mental disintegration so musically and vocally believable was magnificent, sublime. Suddeutsche Zeitung, July 2005

Otello, Munich: Cura's voice has changed considerably. While in the past he showed off a one-colored, one-dimensional dark tenor, his heroic voice has now gained metal and precision. It was suitable that Cura played Otello as a cross between macho and softie, as someone torn back and forth, as a man not above collapsing in shocked disbelief after slapping the woman he adores in the face. München Merkur, July 2005

José Cura ended his 2005 opera season with a run of *Turandot* at Arena di Verona and started the new season in London, starring as Puccini's outlaw hero Dick Johnson in the much anticipated revival of the ROH production of *La fanciulla del west* (September). The performance, marked by Cura's ineffable style, delighted audiences and critics alike, and served as further evidence of his dominance in this role.

La fanciulla del west, London: ***In José Cura [Minnie] has a Dick Johnson worth dying for. This is the best performance Cura has given in London: the selfish outlaw comes good with a voice that rings out handsomely without milking the notes, with a style of acting that never stoops to melodrama.*** Financial Times, September 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***But the "prize", of course, is Dick Johnson, alias the bandit Ramírez, and José Cura, looking as though he'd been built specifically for this role, is the best he has ever been. His animal magnetism counts for a lot here and, since the vocal requirements are all about swarthy, full-on, heroics, he was in his element.*** The Independent, September 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***As for José Cura, the role of Dick Johnson might have been written for him. He plays it to the hilt, his burnished, baritonal tenor shaping the vocal lines with a subtle regard for meaning and emotion. And he can't half open up for the big moments like "Ch'ella mi cre-da." Terrific stuff.*** The Stage, September 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***José Cura, as Johnson, gives off a strange oral musk that makes you believe he's the sexiest thing on legs, even though good sense would normally tell you otherwise. But he can shape a phrase with the best and his voice is ideal for the barely controlled histrionics Puccini demands.*** Evening Standard, September 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***José Cura was, inevitably, the star turn. He looked the part, evidently enjoying the boots, the strut and the swagger; but, more important, he has a good baritonal presence (most of the first act is set very low) and some of the best high B flats in the business.*** Opera, November 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***Those familiar with this charismatic and spirited tenor are well aware that he can add distinction even in new productions of his best roles. This fall, he once more proved able to impress without reservation. The role of Dick Johnson offers the best possible oppor-***

tunity for the virile timbre of this tenor to shine not only in tenacious high altitude flights but also in elegantly measured veristic attacks in the middle voice. The presence of this singer guaranteed high quality. Das Opernglas, November 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***There was only one singer whose mere presence on stage lifted this staging to international theater. José Cura arrived and the atmosphere changed completely, his clarion voice well placed, his baritone register making me wonder if someday he would sing Tristan, his high notes were clean and centered. Cura is also a sensible and intelligent actor who with a look can change the atmosphere of a scene from danger to security, uneasiness to affection and love, a great creation.*** Operayre, September 2005

La fanciulla del west, London: ***In the lead, José Cura was an inspiration. His voice rang out clearly, with refinement and with power. Dramatically his Dick Johnson/Ramerrez was both flashy and passionate at the same time, which matched the character perfectly.*** Mundoclasico, September 2005

In a special treat, Cura reprised the role of Roberto in Puccini's rarely staged first opera, *Le Villi* in Vienna (October). This innovative production featured an intriguing blend of old and new that proved fertile ground for Cura's exciting singing and committed acting. *Le Villi* returned for a limited run in September 2006.

Le Villi, Vienna: ***Add José Cura as a gloriously self-indulgent, golden-throated Roberto and you are in for a great night.*** Financial Times, October 2005

Le Villi, Vienna: ***José Cura throws himself completely into his role. His strong presence makes itself felt even if when he not always singing "in accordance to the school." In his big second act aria "Ecco la casa," he is simply great.*** Der Neue Merker, October 2005

Le Villi, Vienna: ***Applauded wildly by the audience, José Cura (Roberto) sang the emotion-drenched music with bloom.*** Wiener Zeitung, October 2005

Le Villi, Vienna: ***Puccini could not have been better served vocally; José Cura pinged Corelli-like high notes off the ceiling.*** Opera News, January 2006

Le Villi, Vienna: ***José Cura is the unfaithful Roberto. He throws himself completely into his role—his strong presence makes itself felt. In his big second act aria "Ecco la casa," he is simply great. The applause was very strong and prolonged. Plan to attend if at all possible.*** Der Neue Merker, October 2005

2006

In January 2006, Cura returned to the stage in the title role in *Andrea Chénier* at Teatro Comunale di Bologna (released on DVD). The Giordano opera provided a showcase for Cura's insightful interpretation and expressive vocals.

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: ***A perfect Andrea Chénier, with José Cura at his best. Cura has put down his baton and returned to the stage in a role that, with his lirico spinto voice and handsome looks, leaves the impression was written specifically for him. His return is marked by newly formed brilliance and expressive new maturity. Cura sings "Improvviso," which is certainly not a piece of candy in its phrasing, lyricism and fervor, with ease and the audience erupted in applause. In his farewell to life, "Come un bel dì di maggio", he offers soaring high notes held with long breath but also softness and mezzo voce, dynamics this singer would not have employed a few years earlier.*** Il Giornale, January 2006

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: ***Chénier returns to the Comunale and the audience becomes inflamed due to the potent and charismatic stage personality and voice of José Cura. Cura never passes unnoticed: he unleashes unconditional love from the audience. He categorically dominates and imposes.***

Call it pure charisma: when the Argentinian tenor takes the stage, it's useless to deny it, you just watch him. And it is not just for the figure and the strong, passionate, vehement interpretation but rather for the belief that in singing these verismo roles he manages to convey a certain freedom, almost always guided by an unerring musical instinct, which is their raison d'être. His amber voice, full-bodied in the center, ringing and vibrant in the high notes, flows generously in a cantabile but not always as neatly as would be desired. Cura indulges in flagrant behaviors, takes notes at his pleasure but also for the pleasure of the audience who applaud and shout out with unusual participation. Any disagreement is quickly drowned out by the roar of success. In short, while this Chénier is more gallant warrior than delicate poet, he is indisputably fascinating. L'Opera, January 2006

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: Cura was a great protagonist. He presented a fresh, smooth voice in top form. The baritone timbre quality of the role perfectly marries with the middle register and the rise to the high notes, ringing and bright, presented no problem. More detached than shy in the first Act, but always passionate, he brought the house down with "A di all' azzurro spazio," a fiery hymn to justice from the true Chénier. "Sì, fui soldado" contained the right amount of vehemence, while "Come un bel di di maggio" was as poetic as the character. The versatile Argentinian artist gave a generous interpretation that delighted the audience. Mundo-Clasico, January 2006

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: (DVD) Passion was a keyword for that disc and passion is what [Cura] emits in this role from the very first appearance, with a glowing "Un di all' azzurro spazio." He sings the furious "Si fu soldato" in the trial scene (act III) with no safety net. The sad "Come un bel di di maggio" in the last act is begun almost as a dream, lightly sung with some embellishments to the line before he opens out to a heartfelt, glorious climax, greeted with ovations from the audience. Music Web International, September 2006

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: (DVD) In repertoire that can often encourage excessive histrionics, Cura's singing, besides demonstrating first-rate intonation and consistent technical

security, is also utterly disciplined (listen, for example, to the “Improvviso”). Fanfare, 2007

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: (DVD) *This production's Chénier is the Argentine tenor José Cura. He sang Chénier's two major arias on his Verismo CD, and his performance here remains similar – heroic, yet thoughtful. This is a much subtler interpretation than Mario del Monaco's and Corelli's. Cura is handsome, credible, and, at times, quite touching. (I confess to getting choked up during “Un dì, all'azzurro spazio.”)* Classical Net, 2006

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: (DVD) *This 2006 performance finds José Cura fully immersed in the drama of the title role. Chénier's Act II dialogue with Roucher makes an especially powerful impression, with the poet obviously in agony not knowing the identity of the woman who wrote to him. The tenor offers gratifyingly secure vocalism throughout, giving maximum vocal thrill to all the set-pieces.* Opera News, December 2006

Andrea Chénier, Bologna: (DVD) *Giordano's ‘Andrea Chénier’ is now available in a captivating recording from Bologna. With regard to the singing, this performance is one of world-class caliber. José Cura presents himself as one of the best tenors at this time. He is indeed the excellent actor one expects him to be, with a sophisticated perception of his own body, which he brings into play convincingly. In his singing, each note seems deeply felt; the voice performs effortlessly with a warm, dark timbre all the way to the totally clear high notes. Cura's is the perfect balance between spirit and life. The big aria in the first act stands as an example of the art of singing at its best. He thrilled the audience in Bologna with his incredibly nuanced palette of (vocal) colors, a wealth of shadings as well as a large range of dynamics.* Klassik, April 2012

In February, José Cura re-introduced the audience at Teatro Gran Liceu to Verdi's masterpiece, *Otello*, after an eighteen-year absence. Working within a minimalist setting that emphasized the interior life of the character, Cura galvanized the audience with his moving performance, transcending the boundaries of

the production to offer a profoundly moving portrayal. The performance was recorded live and is available in DVD.

Otello, Barcelona: *To speak of Otello is to speak of voice. José Cura has the vocal coloring, the power and strength but above all the dramatic temperament that this colossal Verdi character demands. In his visceral interpretation, the Argentinian tenor strips the character of all nobility and puts himself into his skin and tortured psychology in such a way that he fills the stage and tirelessly maintains the dramatic tension until the anguished finale. Cura is Otello. It's as simple as that.* El País, February 2006

Otello, Barcelona: *José Cura proved himself an excellent actor, which, in this Shakespearean drama, is much to be thankful for. His powerful voice, moments of intensity and sense for the dramatic made for a role of great vibrancy.* La Vanguardia, February 2006

Otello, Barcelona: *Nowadays, there is simply no one else who knows how to make so much out of the Venetian Moor. He was stunning in an impressive "Esultate!" He was irreproachable in the duets with Iago and Desdemona as well as in his two great solo scenes. It is a pleasure to be able to listen to an Otello like that.* La Razón, February 2006

Otello, Barcelona: *In the title role, José Cura demonstrated that he is currently one of the best interpreters of Otello on the international stage.* Canto Lírico, February 2006

Otello, Barcelona: *The tenor, at his peak in terms of voice as well as expressiveness, lives the role, and the way in which he takes over and fills the space is exceptional. His metallic timbre with its burnished sparkle, his projection and the intensity of his accentuation are ideally suited to his character, with whom he seems to have become identified ever since he took on the role in 1997.* Concert Classic, February 2006

Otello, Barcelona: *This Otello did not disappoint. Cura's Otello is a performance that the Liceu audiences will remember for a long time: a profoundly felt, well considered depiction of a man's descent into madness, paired with a true vocal*

tour de force. Cura's tenor is sometimes strained and the sound is not always pretty, but his technique and the communicative powers are astounding. Opera News, May 2006

Otello, Barcelona: (DVD) ***José Cura remains a somewhat frustrating singer but when he opts for sheer power or emotional truth, he is breathtaking—more Vickers than Domingo in his raw brutality and equally raw fragility. I can honestly say that before seeing this performance I had never been moved by a performance of Cura's, but this is a deeply thought-out, thrilling performance you won't soon forget. This serves Verdi's drama as successfully as I've seen in years.*** ClassicsToday

Otello, Barcelona: (DVD) ***José Cura turns Otello into a raging animal. Stalking the stage like a wounded lion, he turns from conquering hero into a haunted figure tortured with jealousy. When Otello savagely cries for vengeance, Cura dominates the stage. When he collapses to the floor at the end of Act III, spasmodic sobs rack his body. His cries piece the plaintive English horn solo that opens the final act. This towering Otello [is] boldly if imperfectly sung in a baritenor of tremendous impact. This intense Otello stuns both the ear and the eye.*** Opera News, June 2007

After reprising Alfredo in *La traviata* and Stiffelio, Cura brought Calaf to life in the Zurich Opera's production of Puccini's *Turandot*. Straddling the old and new, the east and west, the sensual and repressed, this staging relied on humor as much as tragedy to advance a unique psychological theory: an aggressive sexual encounter with an irreverent stranger will bring the most old-fashioned and repressed woman into the modern age. Representing contemporary sensibilities, Cura easily parodied the stereotype of macho lover with a deft, witty approach that delighted the audience. His impeccable comic timing, most notably in the famous Act II riddle scene where his comedic instincts were inspired, sent ripples of laughter through the auditorium. Cura reprised the role in Zurich in season 2006/2007 and again in 2007/2008.

Turandot, Zurich: The Calaf of José Cura was outstanding. At this time no other tenor can so easily master this role. The

bronze, baritonal voice coloring, paired with an incredible expressiveness and vocal strength and, when necessary, with softness, inspired storms of enthusiasm. The nonchalance in his acting and the ease with which he took the high notes made him the winner of the evening. Vox spectatricis, April 2006

Turandot, Zurich: José Cura made a strong impression as Calaf. The Argentinian tenor sang with dark and vigorous tones and easily launched high notes, even singing "Nessun dorma" lying on his back! He showed scrupulous attention to style and score, and he had no problem playing the macho lover required by the staging. Concertonet, April 2006

Turandot, Zurich: His imposing presence made us think the opera should have been called Calaf, but much of his macho self-approval can be easily pardoned thanks to the charisma that characterizes this artist and the almost overwhelming brightness of his vocal projection. Ópera Actual, May 2006

Turandot, Zurich: I had expected a generous and committed physical performance; I hadn't anticipated an impeccable vocal one, too. A well-nigh perfect "Nessun dorma" capped an exciting interpretation that played well to Cura ebullient Action Man strengths. Opera Now, September / October 2006

From Zurich, Cura traveled to Vienna to reprise his role as Roberto in the critically acclaimed revival of Puccini's first opera, *Le Villi*.

In June, Cura returned to Japan with Teatro Comunale di Bologna as the lead role in *Andrea Chénier*. His stellar performance was greeted with glowing reviews and enthusiastic applause led by the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, a noted opera lover.

Andrea Chénier, Tokyo: The performance of José Cura as Andrea Chénier added new aspects to the opera. Maddalena could not help loving the masculine and revolutionary poet with a tender heart. Ongaku no tomo, June 2006

Andrea Chénier, Tokyo: ***Cura's charm fully blooms.*** Mostry Classic, June 2006

Cura's summer took an unexpected turn when he arrived in Verona for the first of several performances as Canio in *Pagliacci*: the tenor scheduled for the role of Turiddu in the double-header *Cavalleria rusticana* withdraw at the very last minute, leaving the Arena di Verona without a world-class tenor to sing the role of the impulsive Sicilian. Cura responded immediately. Stepping onto the ancient Roman stones in brutal summer heat, still suffering the effects from jet-lag and trying to recall the role he had not sung in over ten years, the man of principle repaid a debt of honor to the theater that first opened its arms to him in 1992. It was not an offer made lightly: Cura became only the third tenor in 84 years of the Arena's history to undertake this daunting challenge. Beginning with the daring, impetuous youth who dashed up and down the broad stone steps of the amphitheater and ending with the jealous, violent clown, Cura battled the blistering elements to offer two intensely moving and original interpretations of these cornerstone verismo operas. By the end of opening night the words from *Corriere della Sera* rang true to all who witnessed his brave act of artistic generosity: ***"The savior of the country is José Cura"*** (paraphrasing Aida's text "Salvator della patria!").

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci*, Verona: ***The matador is naturally José Cura, whether as Turiddu or Pagliaccio. His line of singing is reliable, musical, always used with brilliance, according to an interpretation of suffered emotional participation and immediate dramatic evidence.*** L'Arena, June 2006

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci*, Verona: ***There were just two predecessors in 84 years who performed both roles in a single evening, but nobody has carried on his shoulders the performances of this verismo pair the way Cura, the Argentinian gladiator, did.*** *Corriere della Sera*, June 2006

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci*, Verona: ***Without question, the hero of the evening was José Cura, starring in the double role of Turiddu and Canio. A treatise could be written on the Argentinian tenor's unorthodox vocal technique but on this***

evening, his voice shone with power and was notable for long-held high notes. And if we add two intense and first rate interpretations, especially as Canio, his stage presence and wise portrayal, all that is left for us to say is 'Bravo Cura! OperaClick, June 2006

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Verona: José Cura took over the role of Turiddu in addition to that of Canio. Thus the common characteristics of both main tenor parts and the unity of staging created a situation which Cura used for two captivating and intelligent creations with distinct drama and vigor. His Turiddu here was a less macho, more immature mummy's boy, uncertain and unhappy as only a man standing between two women can be. Compared with Cura's achievements the other performers paled. Opernglas, July 2006

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Verona: José Cura was the star here, a Canio deluxe in a vibrant, ringing, heart-felt performance; with a mellow, fully rounded voice that was agile and showed interesting accentuation, beautiful phrasing and flaring bursts in the height. La Discussion, May 2005

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Verona: Tenor José Cura asserts himself totally in 'Pagliacci,' and he is totally successful. Vocally dazzling, Cura presents the image of a Canio in love but tormented at the same time. An actor of extraordinary effectiveness, the Argentinian singer got a genuine 'standing ovation' at the end as confirmation of his superlative performance. La Cronaca, May 2005

In September 2006, Cura traveled to Berlin to end the month in the Deutsche Oper's revival of *La fanciulla del west*. Climbing once more into the skin of the bandito, Cura's charisma and artistic integrity allowed him to reveal the heart of the Puccini's sentimental opera despite unusual staging and unconventional directing.

In October, Cura made a triumphant return to Turin to star as Calaf in an innovative staging of *Turandot*. Drawing attention to the troubled economies of many Italian theaters, the director

Luca Ronconi made use of stage machinery, risers and lighting to set the scene, and evening clothes, talented performers and imagination to tell the tale of the emotionally repressed princess Turandot and the man who wins her. In tux and tails, Cura offered an impeccable evening of vocals capped with a beautifully rendered "Nessun dorma".

Turandot, Turin: ***Calaf in the person of José Cura has a voice and presence of rare authority.*** Il Giornale, October 2006

Turandot, Turin: ***Highest marks go to José Cura. His Calaf is impetuous, at times rabid. He is extraordinary in "Nessun dorma", an aria that is often used as a mirror in which tenors admire their skill. In these notes José Cura never looks in the mirror, never tries to simply show off his voice but instead to use it in the service of his goal of conquest, the source of which is barely controlled anger.*** Trapsi, October 2006

Cura returned to the United States at the end of October for a series of performances at the Metropolitan Opera. As Mario Cavaradossi in the lavish Franco Zefferelli production of *Tosca*, Cura brought new life to the beloved old war horse.

Tosca, New York: ***Cura pulled off the most effective performance of the evening, with consistent tone, dark and rock-solid, and credible acting.*** Opera News, January 2007

Tosca, New York: ***Making his house debut in the role of Cavaradossi was Argentinian tenor José Cura maintained a smooth lyrical line while intoning at an impressively high volume level. Mr. Cura's "E lucevan le stelle," his character's last big number and one of Puccini's most poignant compositions, was really very moving. This 'Tosca' may have been the most memorable for quite some time.*** New York Sun, October 2006

Tosca, New York: ***Playing right along was José Cura's bad-boy Cavaradossi. Mr. Cura has a strong, able voice. He focused on understatement, singing darkly and with such a deliberately casual air. The musical climaxes seemed torn out of him against his will, adding considerably to the drama. 'Tosca' seemed vital again. And in this venerable, twice-told***

production, that is news indeed. New York Times, October 2006

In a rare treat for fans of Verdi's *Don Carlo*, José Cura reprised his acclaimed portrayal of the tortured, insecure Infante in Zurich at the end of November and then brought an entirely different Don Carlo to Vienna, where he shared the stage with some of today's most distinguished performers in an unforgettable evening of great singing, great acting, and great music.

Don Carlo, Vienna: ***The eponymous hero in 'Don Carlo' is seen too briefly, but José Cura, whom we heard for the first time in this role, doesn't allow any possibilities to be overlooked. He is an extremely intelligent singer with a wide technical range which he uses fully (with occasional sobbing and deliberate tremoli added for dramatic effects), and he enters the role as a highly convincing actor. This Don Carlo does not sink into insignificance as happens to so many of his colleagues in this role but captivates through unmistakable and conspicuous presence.*** Der Neue Merker, December 2006

Don Carlo, Vienna: ***The Argentinian has a shattering interpretative presence and his highly disciplined vocal style, effortless production, and virile tenor timbre hit the nail on the head in his musical interpretation; so much so that it overshadowed most of his colleagues. This character is an important mosaic stone in the documentation of role versatility (and makes) the name of "Cura" stands stronger today than ever before.*** Opernglas, January 2007

Don Carlo, Vienna: ***José Cura, a "Method" actor if there ever was one, cut a dashing figure in black leather with a red ribbon; his Carlo was unhinged from the get-go. The role lies perfectly for his chiaroscuro-producing, baritonal tenor, permitting some indulgent but thrilling Corelli-like sustained top notes.*** Opera News, April 2007

Don Carlo, Vienna: ***"Today's performance: Sold out." That's what the sign above the State Opera's box office says. That is hardly amazing with this cast in the current performance series of 'Don Carlo,' a cast list that reads like the Who's Who of the operatic world. As Carlo, José Cura draws a character***

full of passion and devotion, full of Italianate fire. His Carlo is worked out to the last detail and he builds the psychological subtleties exactly. You can hardly do better! Kronen-Zeitung, December 2006

Don Carlo, Vienna: ***Great excitement surrounded José Cura's debut as Don Carlo in this third presentation of the series: Cura offered a serious role interpretation. His is a vocally dominate voice [with] a unique singing technique, influenced by the emotional excess of Verismo: he is not a stylist in the classical sense and can take liberties. This time he held tight to the reins. Cura sang strongly in the ensembles, especially in the upper middle register. In the crucial scene with Elisabeth in the second act he slid to the ground and stretched out before her in humble pleading, and tears were suddenly the foundation for Spanish court etiquette. This short scene allowed the tragedy of the love story to unfold, completely without sobbing or excessive gestures. Toward Phillip, Cura emphasized an Infante who believed fiercely in his mission and pursued it with vigor. He drew no weakling character but rather someone who moved forward in a straight line to achieve his goals. The result was a surprisingly coherent portrait of a character that is simply not easy to create. The audience was audibly happy.*** Operin-Wein, December 2006

2007

Cura emerged from a brief holiday for three opera galas and a reprise of his *Pagliacci*, dubbed "Must See" by the Berliner Morgenpost, in Berlin. In Zurich, he closed out the year with his wildly popular, futuristic *Turandot*; in Palermo, he wowed the crowd with his heroic Mario Cavaradossi in a controversial *Tosca*; and in Baden, he graciously filled in at the last minute for a colleague in a provocative production of the same opera before returning to Berlin for his celebrated Canio.

Tosca, Palermo: José Cura was rewarded by the warmest applause. He created confidence with his presence, in spite of undertaking his task at the last moment and just for one

evening. His is an impressive Cavaradossi, especially in the intensity of his "E lucevan le stelle" with its expressive fullness. Giornale di Sicilia, January 2007

Tosca, Palermo: Wanted and yet neglected, ['Tosca'] was seen in a format that succeeded in the end because of the providential arrival of José Cura, who found a day off between performance for this single night debut—the tenor arrived in the afternoon and stepped onto the stage without having rehearsed and will depart this morning. Cura stimulated the souls of the spectators who honored the tenor with its warmest applause. Giornale di Sicilia, January 2007

Tosca, Karlsruhe: José Cura is, above all, a stage-animal in the truest sense of the word; he outclassed some resident singers with his stage presence, leaving them rather at a loss. Amazing was on top of all that the immense color palette of his sparkling tenor voice, which for all its radiant intensity the Argentinian knew to use in a cultivated manner and with perfect breath control at all times. Klassik, January 2007

Pagliacci, Berlin: Cura, who was the Pagliaccio of the premiere in April 2005, has at his command the most refined and at the same time most natural tenor voice imaginable; he is able to play with it artistically in all possible registers, and possesses immense resources. Add to that a just about painfully vivid stage presence and dramatic acting that leaves the audience rooted to the spot in admiration. Berliner Morgenpost, January 2007

Following another fund-raising gala in Lisbon for the Associação Portuguesa contra a Leucemia, Cura offered a one-night-only presentation of his powerful and acclaimed *Otello* in Mannheim before traveling to Shanghai with the Zurich Opera for *Turandot*.

Otello, Mannheim: José Cura offered a strongly projected Otello. His vocal strengths, which includes a darkly baritonal tenor and a strong inclination toward the dramatic subject, makes him an extraordinarily gifted actor, so much so that the final words of his last aria, the infinitely tender and

equally hopeless "un altro bacio...", before he breathes his last and sinks onto the lifeless body of Desdemona literally left not a single dry eye in the theater. Mannheim Morgener, January 2007

Turandot, Shanghai: Cura stretched on the ground to sing the famous aria "Nessun Dorma," perfectly striking high B. His melodious vocals with beautifully held top notes were expertly controlled. Shanghai Daily, February 2007

Cura sang Roberto in a concert version of Puccini's *Le Villi* in Genoa in March before returning to London to star in *Stiffelio*, a reprise of the role that launched his relationship with ROH in 1995.

Le Villi, Genoa: José Cura triggered applause from the audience after singing, with touching accents of remorse, "Torna ai felici dì" in an intimate, almost chamber-music like manner. Cura always sings with generosity, and for my part, I grant him the unrestrained, and perhaps even irrational, use of a voice kissed by God which continues to offer such emotions. OperaClick, March 2007

Stiffelio, London: Twelve years on, its latest revival effectively allows Cura to return to the role that made him famous. His performance remains compelling in its erratic brilliance. His carnal presence offsets the fiery, eruptive fanaticism that glows in his eyes. Faced with this conflicted creature, you understand why Lina has sought sexual happiness elsewhere yet remains emotionally attached. Guardian, April 2007

Stiffelio, London: José Cura's glassy eyed stare at the work's conclusion made no promises for the future of the relationship, and it made a lot of sense after the tenor's emotionally giving performance. Stiffelio's animalistic, Otello-like rage was kept firmly under lock and key, and when it did burst forth, it did so with venomous fury. Vocally, Cura's inhumanly baritonal tenor found a noble and exciting ring. Music OMH, April 2007

Stiffelio, London: ***Handsome and swaggering, Cura gives a barnstorming performance with a return to the thrilling vocal form which made him famous. He excels at intensity, when finally he forgives Lina you fear for her safety the minute the curtain goes down.*** Evening Standard, April 2007

Cura also took time out in London to hold an extensive master class for a select group of international singers and a follow-up concert in Devon in his role of Patron to the New Devon Opera.

In June, José Cura's career as stage director began in earnest with an exciting tour de force in Rijeka, Croatia. Serving as director, set designer, playwright, and star, Cura fashioned an intriguing concept piece combining narrative, ballet and opera set against the backdrop of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*.

La Commedia e Finita, Rijeka: ***Ovations to Cura's direction. That's in recognition to the first work of José Cura—one of the greatest opera singers, conductors and composers of nowadays—as stage director.*** Vjesnik, June 2007

La Commedia e Finita, Rijeka: ***This was a great success for the first directorial effort by the internationally renowned tenor. Cura, in his début as a stage director, created a new way of thinking about 'Pagliacci.' During two weeks of unflagging work as director, set designer, writer, singer, and also as actor performing his self-written monologue, Cura gave his extraordinary passion, energy and enthusiasm to this show.*** Juntarji List, June 2007

La Commedia e Finita, Rijeka: ***Ovations for 'La commedia e finita.' The spectacular is the brainchild of José Cura, with Cura himself in the triple role of director (his debut), set designer and singer, even playwright. [The results] testify to the many-sided, multi-talented personality of the Argentinian artist whose generous, exuberant and imaginative nature is reflected in the show he created and developed that is both complex and replete with facets and which has a direct and intense impact on the audience. His engagement drew sustained applause from the packed house.*** La Voce del Popolo, June 2007

In July, José Cura made his triumphant return to Argentina. Beginning with Cura's participation in the rededication of the Monument to the Flag in his hometown (where he was introduced as one of the 50 extraordinary Rosarinos), through a series of semi-staged, rapturously received performances of *Samson et Dalila* in Buenos Aires and an unforgettable, intimate concert in front of family and friends where he unveiled new compositions based on the poetry of Pablo Neruda, and ending with a final, fascinating master class held for aspiring local singers at Rosario's University.

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: ***With superior artistic intensity Cura applied an infinite number of vocal devices to his singing. The first delights came when the choir sang of their despair. And when from the center of this same choir, hidden among so many dark vestments, arose the powerful, overwhelming and magnificent voice of José Cura, there followed astonishment, fascination and admiration.*** La Nación, June 2007

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: ***Cura admirably personifies his role. His line of singing is luscious, without cracks in the heroic registry in the first act, as in the more lyrical of the second act or in the whispered and broken of the third act.*** Clarin, June 2007

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: ***The tenor José Cura, in the main role of this masterpiece of French opera, was incomparable. His vocal qualities are exceptional, his musicality ideal and the force of his delivery impressive. Cura was the pillar of this 'Samson and Dalila.'*** Ambitoweb, June 2007

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: ***Cura revealed a powerful dark tone, full of color, very supple in nuances, completely homogeneous and expressed with astonishing naturalness. His work showed without doubt that he is one of the principal singers of the world at the moment.*** La Prensa, June 2007

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: ***In the splendid opening performance of this concert version programmed by Teatro Colón, José Cura, stunning vocally and also profoundly convincing as an actor, clearly demonstrated the significance of***

space in heightening the dramatic effect from the start in his manner of interacting with the chorus. With powerful yet subtle voice, Cura took delight in the pianissimos, in raising the pitch, and even in groaning. His character literally took body and his voice became part of that body. Pagina 12, June 2007

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: The indisputable star of the night was José Cura's performance. From his initial appearance, almost magical, materializing in the middle of the chorus, singing as he came down the stairs to the edge of the stage, the adrenaline raced through the auditorium. His voice sounded marvelous, with excellent volume, beautiful timber—almost baritonal—the particular emphasis he put on his statements and the incredible array of vocal resources that he used. And his work as an actor carried his unmistakable stamp. Samson seems to fit him like a ring on a finger. The quality of his contribution did not waiver through the performance and he received a well-deserved ovation. Cura really is a Divo, with all this word implies, but without doubt he is one of those singers for whom every phrase, every sound he emits has a special value, a bonus. Canto, August 2007

Samson et Dalila, Buenos Aires: The possessor of significant volume, solidly dramatic, the Rosarino tenor arrives in the middle of a career that has taken him to the most distinguished international stages. And this is certainly absolutely justified, based on the qualities he demonstrated in his performance in the concert version of this most beautiful work. Cura (Samson) highlighted a powerful dark tone, full of color, very supple in nuances, completely homogeneous and expressed with astonishing naturalness. His work showed that without doubt he is one of the principal singers of the world. La Prensa, June 2007

Master Class, Rosario: If there is a pinnacle for artists, that is, a higher level where the chosen few live, then yesterday, Friday, 27 July 2007, between 10 AM and 8 PM, José Cura's place remained empty, because during that time he descended with humility to the lower level to connect with the youths who attended his master class, as much with those

who sang as with those who listened. (Yes, you read correctly, with humility, words which, according to "critics" cannot be applied to this Rosarino who is so passionate about his work). EntreNotas, July 2007

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

Masterclass and Concert, Nancy: We discovered the measure of this artist: the exceptional cream and quality of the timbre, combined with perfect control of vocal emission and a warmly Latin vibration and an interpreter who obviously "lives" what he sings. We also had the measure of this chef-d'orchestre in opera: José Cura let the orchestra breathe. In brief, José Cura made the entire overture vibrate with a theatrical sense. Forum Opéra, September 2007

The 2007/2008 schedule, filled with a number of enticing performances, began with a stunning *Carmen* at the *George Enesco Festival* in Bucharest:

Carmen, Bucharest: What was there to see in the first show hosted by the Bucharest National Opera in this edition of the 'George Enescu' Festival? José Cura himself, a handsome, temperamental, sensitive singer the kind we hadn't seen on our stages for a very long time a high-class and intelligent artist, a man who probably creates a magnetic field around him wherever he goes, and who naturally attracts appraisal due to his celebrity. A new triumph for José Cura! Radio Romania Muzical, September 2007

Carmen, Bucharest: The second essential point in the work comes at the end of Act III when Don José's love turns to hate. Tenor José Cura was, at that moment, the most powerful Don José that I have ever seen or heard. Cura offered a solid Don José, without internal cracks, who manages to be outwardly humble and lyrical while at the same time indestructibly arrogant. What a rare thing! I cheered enthusiastically and cried 'bravo!' with all my heart. Cura's great quality is not his voice, though without a doubt he sings very well; his vocal cords have been kissed by God. And yet, it is

due to the temperament of this huge dramatic tenor, his acting that he invests in the character and not necessarily in the music. With keen intelligence, Cura knows how to use his voice in a special way. His interpretative solutions are unique, surprising. Where almost all other tenors use piano, he forces one or two notes, makes a split second stop and then offers a tense piano. Every time it works. He convinces. Cura is that kind of tenor, quite rare, who excels in those moments when the character lives an emotional earthquake, must make major decisions, or keenly feel the feelings. For me, the scene at the end of Act III was fantastic. From that moment, when Don José is rejected by Carmen, he becomes her most dangerous enemy. And Cura showed us this transformation with the same clarity as teachers show students how bodies are dissected. Cotidianul, September 2007

Carmen, Bucharest: José Cura amazed the audience with his machismo, intensity, and interpretation. But if many were expecting to see a romantic Carmen, the Gala performance on Sunday must have taken them by surprise. Cura's vision turned Bizet's opera into a passionate and exciting performance, putting particular emphasis on the character of Don José. Cura's Don José is an arrogant man but one in accordance with the time, whose machismo attitude could not tolerate the behavior of a free and powerful Carmen. The murder at the end of the opera is not an act of jealousy but the natural act of strong man in the face of humiliation. Two scenes in particular took away the audience's breath: the third act, when Don José is called home by Micaela for his ailing mother—the violence Cura calls up could be read on [Carmen's] face—and the final scene, when the intensity of Cura's interpretation erased any trace of theatricality, as if he had brought the boiling blood and nerves of Don José to the stage. Cotidianul, October 2007

Returning to Barcelona for a month-long run of *Andrea Chénier* at the Gran Liceu, Cura demonstrated once more why he remains one of the leading proponents of the role:

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: In the main role, the Argentinian tenor José Cura provided an intense portrait of the poet Andrea Chénier, convincing in the color, the quality and the

power of a voice produced with extreme ability. Voices of this caliber are seldom heard. El País, September 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: ***Andrea Chénier is an opera to bring out the best of a tenor and José Cura triumphed in the role.*** El Mundo, September 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: ***José Cura was a fully convincing Chénier, here in ideal vocal condition, possessing high notes, appropriate phrasing and dramatic intensity.*** ABC, September 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: ***José Cura possesses the density, the wounded gravity, and the aura of the poet, every part of which he qualifies with a restraint which multiples tenfold his vocal charm. He has everything needed to move the audience: the beauty of his timbre, his radiant physical appearance, his projection.*** Concert Classics, October 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: ***As Chénier, Cura opted for dramatic truth over the virile brio and heroic antics that characterized his previous appearances at the Liceu. His poet was a subdued, confused dreamer overcome by the grave circumstances that flooded his romance and everything else in blood and tears. His choices were dramatically powerful and musically consistent: he placed his highly individual, expressive voice completely at the service of the opera.*** Opera News, January 2008

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: ***José Cura was all dedication and passion as Andrea Chénier, driving with mastery his particular dark vocal color and specifically emphasized in the upper register where he showed a dazzling security—his “A all'azzurro di spazio” was outstanding.*** MundoClasico, October 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: ***The choice of José Cura as headliner for this production was a no-brainer. This splendid singer and simmering actor has no trouble slipping into the skin of the poet caught by the Terror and beheaded at the age of 32. In triumphant vocal form, Cura appropriated an ideal way with the words of Chénier from “Improvviso” with***

bronze tones and in temperament as the damaged fawn in the final hours of the rebel poet (a beautiful “Come un bel di di maggio” in the fourth act). He made us believe in his character from beginning to end, moving and credible. Scenes Magazine, September 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: José Cura possesses the density, the wounded gravity, and the aura of the poet, every part of which he qualifies with a restraint which multiples tenfold his vocal charm. While he has everything needed to move the audience—the beauty of his timbre, his radiant physical appearance, his projection—we regret to see him so underused by a director who does not realize how lucky he is [to have him]. Concert Classics, October 2007

Andrea Chénier, Barcelona: José Cura is currently the Andrea Chénier of reference. Vocally, he dominated from first note to last and his characterization of the poet was totally natural. His voice filled the auditorium to the last row because of its very peculiar timbre; his tessitura is deep and velvety with brilliant high notes. La Porta Classica, September 2007

Cura traveled to Cologne in October to headline in the famous verismo double-bill:

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Cologne: A rollicking atmosphere, a full house, “Bravos!” shouted for José Cura, the guest star in the return of Mascagni’s ‘Cavalleria rusticana’ and Leoncavallo’s ‘Pagliacci’ in the Cologne Opera. By nature attractive in features, voice and play, Cura sang with fervor, passion and light. Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, October 2007

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Cologne: Let us talk about the music and, of course, José Cura. We know his technical flaws. One either accepts them or not. This time, we tend to accept, first because this singing is appropriate in verismo and second because Cura arrives in excellent vocal form. The timbre, with its unique bronze color, is more beautiful than ever, the arrogance of the treble is admirable and the constant search for shades and colors impresses. In addition, the actor avoids mannerisms. His Turiddu is haughty and brutal before touching us deeply in his farewell to his

mother. Ovations at the end, especially for José Cura. Res Musica, November 2007

Cura returned to Zurich for a brief run of the house's very popular production of *Turandot* in mid-December.

Turandot, Zurich: The Calaf of José Cura, whose timbre confirms his suitability for Puccini roles, is carefully considered and convincing. Cura, a singer naturally endowed with great stage charisma, is able to give his character creditable phrasing and studied sensitivity, blending everything with an awareness of stage and theater that makes his characters theatrically complete, dramatic and engaging. L'Opera, February 2008

In 1996, José Cura debuted in the role of Pollione in the Los Angeles Opera's production of *Norma* to roaring approval; eleven years later, in Vienna, he stepped effortlessly back into the role of the young Roman proconsul to earn equal acclaim and applause.

Norma, Vienna: In his house role debut, José Cura finds the correct sound for the thankless role of Pollione. Cura's tenor is Italianate and has a lot of bloom. And even as his voice is growing more and more baritonal, all the necessary high notes remain. Kurier, November 2007

Norma, Vienna: José Cura as Pollione scores with radiant high notes and romantic bloom. Wiener Zeitung, November 2007

Norma, Vienna: The third person in this alliance was José Cura as Pollione. Certainly he is not known as a bel canto singer; however he was able to sing the line very well, to pull his voice back and adapt it to the form resulting in a beautiful partnership with the music. This was already apparent in his entrance aria. Other houses can only envy Vienna. Der Neue Merker, November 2007.

2008

Tragedy struck in early 2008 when José Cura's beloved father died unexpectedly the same day as the premier of Massenet's rarely performed *Le Cid* in Zurich; with no replacement readily available for the taxing lead role of Rodrigue, Cura demonstrated once more his solid professionalism and artistic commitment by ensuring the show went on with an emotionally charged, unforgettable performance on 13 January. He then flew home to Rosario to honor Oscar Cura before returning to Zurich to finish his engagement in what was clearly one of the most compelling tributes to his father's memory. The vocal requirements of Rodrigue fit Cura's warm, masculine tenor perfectly as did the romantic, heroic character; those lucky enough to be in the audience richly rewarded the artist for his transcendent performance.

Le Cid, Zurich: Never before had the Argentinian tenor been seen so emotionally involved in his role as on this evening as 'Le Cid' in Jules Massenet's opera by the same name. In Cura's case it did not just mean: "The show must go on"; rather, in his singing there was a hint of personal pain vibrating along. The way he kept adjusting the heroic registers of his rich tenor voice time and again to muted piano tones was simply magnificent. Neue Luzerner Zeitung, January 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: As a singer, Cura was impeccable; with commanding vocal brilliance, intensity and charisma as well as being stylistically secure, at times willful, but always musically and emotionally understandable. The standing ovations, which he merited in every respect, were certain to be his at the end. Die Sdostschweiz, January 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: Given the vocal "forza" and the expressive power and effectiveness which the Argentinian singer was able to put into the part of the protagonist, one cannot but admire the professionalism of this artist. Bravo! Aargauer Zeitung, January 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: *Certainly thanks to tenor José Cura who surpassed himself, so moving and inspired was his interpretation of the part. Cura went through his first scene audibly marked, but then he worked himself up into a state of extreme emotion-charged intensity; he found muted vocal shades, also allowed himself tearful outbursts and in spite of vocal extravagances adapted himself to the ensemble, which followed along on a level of highest quality. At the end, there was a standing ovation for Cura, the scarred hero, and his comrades-in-arms which lasted several minutes: a rare occurrence in Zurich.* St. Galler Tagblatt, January 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: *José Cura was dazzling in his debut as Rodrigue; the voice of this artist is the correct size and measure for the role. Very musical, precise, measured in the flow of the song and more vigorous in the chivalrous exaltation when his timbre dominated with an emission that took nothing away from the epic inspiration of the tone, it was resplendent in its heroic and vibrant intensity. Alternatively, he detailed a sensitive and impassioned lover with great attention to the words and phrasing, giving us an overall complex interpretation, sensitive and musically much appreciated. The audience that filled the theater rewarded the artist with numerous and sustained applause, dedicating a wonderful and very much spontaneous standing ovation to the overwhelmed artist, holding him figuratively in an affectionate embrace.* L'Opera, February 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: *The chance to embody the right character and thus help a forgotten opera to its revival on international stages during the past years is the chance José Cura found in 'Le Cid.' It is as if the figure of Rodrigue, the legendary Spanish war hero in this effective and artistic four-act opera, had been made for José Cura, both with his macho-like extroversion as well as with his tender musically miraculous visions. Trumpet-like high notes stood beside tenderly breathed passages.* Das Opernglas, February 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: *José Cura looked and acted the part of Rodrigue to perfection—youthful, courageous, deeply involved emotionally. He poured all his heart into a melting "O sour-*

verain, ô juge, ô père." Cura's tenor certainly has the necessary steel that Jean de Reszke, the first Rodrigue, seems to have possessed. Opera News, April 2008

Le Cid, Zurich: *With a great standing ovation, the Swiss audience in the prestigious Zurich Opera applauded Argentinian tenor José Cura, rewarding not only a brilliant performance but the sacrifice and courage it took to sing that night. The solitude of the hero in "O souverain, ô juge, ô père" must have made it immensely difficult to sing, but the tenor performed with great nobility. Dynamics which shifted between forte and mezzo-forte presented no problem for this tenor, who prevailed on the orchestra with a powerful and interesting voice and an always inexhaustible reserve. Despite the personal tragedy, it was an artistically triumphant night for the Argentinian singer.* La Nación, January 2008

In mid-February he headed for Vienna for two performances of *Pagliacci* at the Staatsoper but this time with a twist only a special performer could pull off: following the sudden illness of the baritone scheduled to sing Tonio, Cura stepped forward to fill the void...

Pagliacci, Vienna: Purists raged that it made no sense to have Canio sing the Prologue since the character is presumably dead by execution and that the only survivors of 'Pagliacci' are Tonio and Beppe. To hell with them: Cura, who has had surprisingly few performances in America but here is an official Divo with a wide and adventurous repertoire, entered on February 17 in a black jacket and white shirt and poured out the most luscious rendition of this chestnut I can recall, purposely darkening his already mahogany-hued tenor. Singing simply without added histrionics, Cura soared over the most beautiful music in Leoncavallo's opera with effortless, spine-tingling high notes that most baritones can only dream of. Okay, it may not have been kosher, but it was thrilling beyond belief, and this was just the start. Cura was a mercurial Canio, joking with the contadini but suddenly turning explosive over the merest jest about infidelity. His elegantly-phrased, introspective "Vesti la giubba" was a

match for his explosive "No! Pagliaccio non son!" Opera News, February 2008

After conducting a symphonic concert at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin in March, Cura made his much anticipated return the United States in *Pagliacci* at San Diego Opera: the first time he had performed Canio in North America. Audience and critical response was immediate and effusive.

Pagliacci, San Diego: If you cannot think of any reason to go and see this production, you need to consider this very important one: Argentinian tenor, José Cura. I am not sure that I have enough adjectives at hand to describe his mastery of this role, the thrilling richness, the resounding timbre of his voice and the point perfect acting he delivered on the opening night. There was not one flaw or misstep in his performance and he brought admirable complexity to this part. Closing the eyes and listening to just his voice, was nothing short of stunning. When presented with the entire package, his tall, dark good looks, the passion that he gave to this performance was magical. His delivery of the "Vesti la giubba" reminds us of why this relatively short aria is so well loved. Never have violent, abusive tendencies been so smolderingly sexy. Classical Voice, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: Much of the publicity preceding these performances concerned the appearance of superstar tenor, José Cura, as Canio. He did not disappoint. His easily produced rich tenor voice rolled out over the audience like waves in the ocean. Not only was he vocally powerful, he proved to be a committed actor as well. His "Vesti la giubba" was worthy of comparison with any of the great renditions of that aria heard over the last thirty years. Music&Vision, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: Argentinian tenor José Cura, in his SDO debut, effortlessly delivered a strong performance. His Canio was absolutely charming when interacting with the village children in the opening scene, sympathetically heartbroken at the revelation of his wife's adultery, and truly frightening as his pain rose to a terrifying conclusion and the dual murder of his wife and her lover. He delivered a

voice that filled this hall with resonance and richness. His "Vesti la giubba" delivered anger as well as anguish and was met with thunderous applause. OperaClick, April 2008
Pagliacci, San Diego: *One of the highlights was Cura's vibrant company debut as Canio, the cuckolded clown. Small wonder it's his signature role. Cura's blend of magnetic stage presence, distinctive artistry and a strong yet supple voice brought out the contrast between Canio's self-assurance as head of the travelling troupe and his crushing despair as the husband of an unfaithful wife. Nowhere was he more compelling than in the famous "Vesti la giubba." As he applied his white makeup, he sang with heart-in-the-throat fervor, accentuating the pathos of one of opera's most famous (and wrenching) arias.* Union-Tribune, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: *San Diego Opera has promoted its current production of the one-act operas 'Cavalleria rusticana' and 'Pagliacci' as a double-bill, but a more apt description of this 'Cav/Pag' union would be as appetizer and main course. While 'Cav' has symphonic beauty, fine choruses and a standout soprano, it's the 'Pag' half of the evening that will resonate in the memories of local operagoers. Argentinian tenor José Cura's beautifully sung and ferociously acted performance as the sad clown Canio in 'Pagliacci' is what world-class singing is all about, and he's ably assisted by a strong supporting cast, subtler direction and a more compelling story. [Richard Leech's] top range remained secure, but he was no match for Cura's vocal richness, seemingly effortless control and sustained, ringing top notes. Cura's a handsome, magnetic artist at the prime of his career, and it's a gift to San Diegans to have him here, if only for one-half of the 'Cav/Pag' bill.* North County Times, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: *As the tormented clown Canio, José Cura blew the production out of the water. Yes it's a signature role for the Argentinian tenor, and yes I have heard of him, but nothing could have prepared me for this man's voice and presence. The tenor commanded a voice completely and uniquely his own. His interpretation of Canio's famous aria, "Vesti la giubba," rivals Pavarotti's famous 1974 "Nessun*

Dorma." Cura's rendition of Canio's anguish brought tears to my eyes. Voice of San Diego, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: José Cura is a tornado that sucks the breath out of the listener and creates howlers out of staid San Diegans. It was Cura's evening all the way. So assured is his performance it's almost as if intentionally casual. See me. I can do this. It's easy. In "Vesti la giubba" he tosses off high notes traditionally held by others because they're hard to release. He holds other high notes ad infinitum, to the edge of credibility and self-indulgence, simply because he is able to and we are willing to listen for as long as it lasts, hopefully forever. The same applies to Cura's dramatic interpretation of the jealousy-crazed clown, thrilling, outrageous and ultimately heartbreaking. La Jolla Village News, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: Maestro Miller kept the show moving well from the orchestra pit, but set a rather undramatically quick pace for the show's most dramatic aria, Canio's "Recitar... Vesti la giubba." A lesser singing-actor would have found it harder to move the audience singing that thing at such a fast tempo, but then it is for occasions like this that theaters heartily pay the asking price to get an artist like José Cura to star in their shows. From the moment he first entered the stage there was no question who 'the boss' was. And then he started singing and I knew I was in the presence of a sacred monster, a kind of star who sells out the biggest of opera houses just by being in a cast. What can I say? The guy has a one-in-a-few-millions tenor voice: clear and beautiful with enough zing in it to blow the roof off a skyscraper. And he knows how to act both vocally and physically. There is so much of that irresistibly magnetic 'attitude' on the stage that the few high notes that were held indecently long wouldn't bother anyone in their right mind. Epinions, March 2008

Pagliacci, San Diego: One star role, Canio, properly cast, dominates the performance. Argentinian José Cura proved to be an extraordinary performer. (He also proved to have a couple of virtuoso moves on the bass drum; few Canios show any remarkable skills as percussionists.) From the stand-

point of the audience, there is a rush one feels when large voices of this degree of resonance and dramatic intensity perform roles, such as Canio and Otello, that push the tenor voice to highest demands of the core Italian repertory. For those who sought an effective presentation of 'Pagliacci,' performed in a manner that preserved performance traditions that would have likely won the support of the opera's composer-librettist, and with a star that has to be listed among the millennium's most important tenors, the San Diego Opera new production would surely have met these criteria. Opera Warhorses, March 2008

Returning to Europe following his California success, José Cura traveled to Szeged, Hungary, for a two-performance stint as Otello and then to Hannover's Staatsoper for a single gala performance of the same opera. He followed that performance with a luminous Cavaradossi in *Tosca* in Karlsruhe.

Otello, Szeged: *I wasn't fascinated by his first appearance; "Esultate" sounded secure and powerful but rather incidentally. It did not stroke into the semi-darkness like a thunderbolt. But by the time of the love duet José Cura had managed to swing the performance into the sphere of timelessness with his gentle yet virile vocalism and stage presence. And how was José Cura singing after that? I am tempted to answer I don't know, I don't remember, I don't care. I am not sure if José Cura sang or even if he was on the stage at all, because Otello himself was present. I never knew 'Otello' could be like this. Of course his singing was outstanding. This exemplary interpretation was a holistic experience.* Muzsika, June 2008

Otello, Hannover: *One suspected a hurricane had announced itself, one anticipated to arrive at the end of the first act immediately following the duet of Otello and Desdemona. When José Cura stepped before the curtain for his solo curtain call, the bravos swept his hair back like a ride in a convertible. And at the end the opera house shook for fifteen and a half minutes with rhythmic clapping and innumerable bravos as even the second tier patrons rose from their seats for a standing ovation and rhythmic clapping and roses rained onto the stage. A powerful Otello: José Cura was on from*

the opening, singing "Esultate!" with immense vocal resource. His expression of fury and despair, colored with a slightly baritone voice with excellent top notes, in "Niun mi tema" was world class, a real treat for opera fans. Cura did not retreat to cheap tenoral tricks: the occasional sob turned out to be very attractive, especially since no one else today delivers them in this way. This 'Otello' was a performance of sheer joy. Neue Press, April 2008

Otello, Hannover: A request you follow joyfully: "Esultate!" demands Verdi's title hero vividly at his very first entrance. The sheer glory of the Italian dramatic tenor voice is mirrored in this exclamation, when Otello raises his voice over the acoustic waves of orchestra and chorus. What more could one expect from world-class tenor José Cura, who appeared in the newly revived series of Festlichen Opernabend? Cura's performance in Hannover can safely be counted among the great musical events in the city's history. Not because an international opera star appeared and sang well but because his characterization added the decisive weight to a performance and lifted it from the good towards the extraordinary and turned it into an unforgettable night at the opera. Hannoverische Allgemeine, April 2008

Tosca, Karlsruhe: José Cura, one of the few who have proven to be a world star since the collapse of the classical record market, performed for the second time in the local production, and it would be difficult to find a more convincing Cavaradossi today in his baritone timbre, the moving piani of "O dolci mani" and his creative power of interpretation of the role. Badische Neueste Nachrichten, April 2008

The month of June found Cura firmly entrenched in Italian theater, returning to Bologna for one of his signature roles, Samson, and then on to Turin for Puccini's rarely performed *Edgar* in an early celebration of the 150th anniversary of Puccini's birth. *Edgar* was recorded for release as on DVD and Blu-Ray.

Samson et Dalila, Bologna: The predominant tessitura of Samson is congenial to both the beautiful voice of José Cura and his temperament. The broad timbre, encased in burnis-

hed velvet, is at its best in the middle tones. In the third act the singer offers the best of himself and the results are excellent, showcasing a man defeated but not tamed, making credible and touching the prolonged moral agony. This Samson, in fact, is not drawn from the religious, maintains at all time a very strong human nature with no hidden "divine mission," combining fragility and vulnerability to make the events even more tragic. Teatro, June 2008

Samson et Dalila, Bologna: *The Bologna season ended with a resounding success for 'Samson et Dalila,' marked by the rhythmic 'wave' of the final applause. Principle merit must be attributed to that vocal and interpretive hurricane who answers to the name of José Cura. One of the roles felt most keenly by the Argentinian tenor from Rosario is Samson. There are few to turn now for the role: with the abdication by Domingo, Cura is the only Samson. Beyond the undeniable stage presence, it must be noted in this role Cura's obvious musical engagement in respect to the score and in adherence to the signs of expression, arriving at a display of unthinkable and sweet mezza voci in the vocal surrender, where the timbre of precious bronzed amber stands out in all its manly beauty. When he is on stage he is the catalyst who demands the attention while the others struggle twice as hard to be noticed.* L'Opera, August 2008

Samson et Dalila, Bologna: *With great pleasure we found José Cura in wonderful form, extraordinary in stage craft and incisive in accents and phrasing.* Opera Magazine, June 2008

Samson et Dalila, Bologna: *With his natural fighter's temperament, José Cura mesmerized the audience and it would be difficult nowadays to find a more convincing Samson with the requisite quasi-baritonal qualities.* Opera Now, September/October 2008

Edgar, Turin: *In Turin, no one succeeds more than José Cura with his erotic brute force in the title role of the orphan man. He is seduced by the evil Tigrana away from lovely Fidelia who nevertheless remains faithful. In the pastoral fourth act, after he has returned home, Cura animates his character with youthful tenderness. In the current Puccini*

celebration year this performance stands out as a lonely jewel. It is incomprehensible that both Munich and Berlin allowed this opportunity to escape. Der Welt, July 2008

Edgar, Turin: ***Edgar has the charm and stage presence of the intriguing José Cura as a point of strength. Certainly the part is very complex and there is some forcing perceived when his singing is dramatically taut and angry, but in some of the phrases in the duet in the last act, Cura lightened his voice and offered beautiful moments, confirming him as one of the top tenors of the time.*** L'Opera, August 2008

Edgar, Turin: ***With the phenomenal José Cura in the title role the Teatro Regio could get one of the best singers in the world for this role. His deep-voiced tenor is a perfect fit for this conflicted figure, self-restrained even in the arias.*** Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, July 2008

Edgar, Turin: (DVD) ***Argentinian tenor José Cura is at his stentorian best, an approach that works well in this blood and guts piece, and he is in excellent voice. The unit set is beautiful, and the videography is superb. This is an important addition to the discography of early Puccini.*** La Scena Musicale, November 2009

Edgar, Turin: (DVD) ***This performance is headed by the great Argentinian José Cura, so successful in Italian 'heldentenor' repertory ('Trovatore,' 'Otello'). He is heartrending in his immersion into Edgar's character.*** Whole Note, November 2009

Edgar, Turin: (DVD) ***This is not just a beautifully designed, staged, and sung production of Puccini's second and least performed opera, but counts as an historical document as well. Preserved here is the first performance of the original four-act version since its world premiere on April 21, 1889. The singers are a well matched set with pride of place going to Cura's dramatic Edgar.*** American Record Guide, January/February 2010

Edgar, Turin: (DVD) ***Obviously, the Argentinian tenor found the measure of his character: with his dramatic, incandescent voice of power and color, he took on the Edgar role and made it absolutely convincing.*** ClassiqueNews, October 2009

Edgar, Turin: (DVD) ***José Cura lends impressive acting intensity to Edgar; his dark presence and the baritonal timbre of his tenor fit perfectly together.*** Das Opernglas, November 2009

Cura rounded out the summer months with a brief return to Zurich for two performances of *Turandot* and finished the summer season with a spectacular *Samson et Dalila* at the equally spectacular *Santander Festival*, Spain.

Samson et Dalila, Santander: ***Style tenor José Cura undoubtedly has, and his beautiful timbre shone brightly in his debut in the Santander Festival. He has the force and dramatic quality necessary for this role and was splendid in the second act aria, "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix," sung with Dalila.*** El Diario Montañés, August 2008.

The start of the 2008/2009 season saw Cura presenting a master class for the New Devon Opera, for which he is Patron. In mid-September, he returned to the Royal Opera to reprise a role Cura seemed born to play, Dick Johnson in the Covent Garden production of *La fanciulla del west*.

La fanciulla del west, London: ***José Cura's Dick Johnson returned from the 2005 cast, in throatier voice, but still with ringing top notes. He looks the bandit to perfection. I doubt he can be bettered in this role today.*** The Times, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***José Cura returned to the role he had previously sung in 2005 at Covent Garden in wonderful vocal health. His was a much understated, subtly emotional, performance throughout Act I in the playful delicate blossoming of love between him and Minnie and which continued through their duet in Act II. Cura was exaltedly impassioned when singing "Ch'ella mi creda libera" in Act III. There was an ease and command to his performance th-***

roughout the whole evening allied to a burnished baritone timbre and effortless, ringing, high notes. Seen and Heard, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***Visually Cura is perfect for the part: handsome, charismatic, a little rough around the edges and his voice, too, lives up to the hype; the showcase "Ch'ella mi creda" aria could have been a touch more lingering, but elsewhere he was close to perfection.*** Music OMH, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***Cura sings with muscular energy, and he's the macho bandit to the hilt.*** The Times, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***Cura's Dick Johnson has plenty of bravado, and he can sound mighty impressive.*** The Telegraph, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***Cura's Dick Johnson is a magnificent role assumption; indeed it's one of his finest, in my opinion. The expressive vocal writing, free and conversational rather than classically rigid, is well matched to his talents, while it's a treat to see a singer-actor of his stature inhabit a character as fully as he does here. He's every bit Ramirez the Bandit, and he made a particular impression in the final two acts, which call upon him to declare passion, fall about dizzily while bleeding from a severe wound and give a moving speech before his death.*** Musical Criticism, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***We live in an age when opera is truly theatre, too, in the sense that action and staging are not mere adjuncts to the music, but, as they should be, full partners to it. This 'Fanciulla' is just such good theatre, but it also reminds one that the quality of singing has a role in the psychological dimension of that theatricality along with the quality of the music. In every role from minor to major the performances were sure, satisfying and full of energy and intensity. This was a night of opera as opera should by definition be, which is to say a great night of opera.*** Times Literary Supplement, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***José Cura brings balance to the stage. Magnetic, out-of-the-ordinary, appealing, his bandit entices us like a black diamond with his quiet confidence and fiery eyes. The performer hit perfectly in each situation; his full and intoxicating voice throughout the register reminds us what a great tenor stands before us.*** ConcertClassical, September 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***Through his natural and magnetic presence, José Cura offers a portrait of the bandit Johnson that was larger than life from first glance. His performance is both rich and unsettling in that it expresses both desire and mystery accompanied by an exceptional vocal performance, where the tenor can exploit the dark grain of his voice.*** Scènes Magazine, November 2008

La fanciulla del west, London: ***José Cura is well known to London audiences as Dick Johnson, a role that fits him like a glove. As the bandit transformed by the love of a good woman, he is in sensational voice and a dominant and potent presence. A great night for the Royal Opera—and for Puccini.*** The Stage, September 2008

The Tenerife Auditorio hosted Cura in November when he brought his *Otello* to the Atlantic Island for the fall festival; this stark, unforgiving production brought out the best in the performer, who dominated the stage and brought a sense of occasion to the otherwise murky effort.

Otello, Tenerife: ***The role of Otello was interpreted by a splendid José Cura, undoubtedly one of the most famous 'Otellos' of the moment, and he did not disappoint. Cura embroidered the role of the jealous Moor of Venice with intensity, coloring the varied expressions required by Verdi. And even though the director forced the singers to the back of the stage and in spite of the problems with projection in the Auditorio, Cura knew exactly how to resolve these disadvantages.*** Diario de Avisos, November 2008

Cura closed the month of November in Mannheim starring in the verismo twins and started the month of December in Vienna with *Tosca*.

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci*, Mannheim: ***Quite at the end of the fun, when the compelling murder [drama] becomes serious, José Cura suddenly pulled out the emergency registers and sang like a God. With more and more stress, with more and more brilliance, with more and more strength his Canio demanded of Nedda the name of her lover, before he stabbed them both. The national theater orchestra under Alexander Kalajdzic carried Cura on the blazing sound that forms the foundation of the horror and ended the festive opera evening which began with an announcement from the director: "José Cura will sing, although he was very sick with a cold." During much of the evening Cura was demonstrably ill. He was exhausted. Almost feverish. And yet he sang well, and even better at the end.*** Morgenweb, November 2008

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci*, Mannheim: ***The good news: he came and he sang. The bad: top singer José Cura, cast in both the tenor leads of Mascagni's 'Cavalleria rusticana' and Leoncavallo's 'Pagliacci' at the Mannheim Opera Gala at the National Theater, had a very bad cold. He fought bravely, however. Cura sang and performed with emotional intensity, unconditional will in expression and passionate stress in diction, completely in harmony with the verismo style of both one-act plays. Both of these stage characters, the fiery Sicilian village Don Juan, the daredevil and macho Turiddu, and the hot-blooded and crude theater director of the travelling troupe, received extremely distinct profiles and worked convincingly in the representation offered by the Argentinian singer. Add to that the exquisite sound quality of Cura's dramatic tenor.*** Die Rheinpfalz, November 2008

Tosca, Vienna: ***José Cura does not necessarily belong among my personal favorites but if one becomes accustomed to his freestyle singing, one must express a compliment for his achievement. Not only was he persuasive in the 'forte' parts, he also showed in places, as in the beginning of "E lucevan le stelle," that he was also able to pull himself inward to phrase beautifully and produce the colors for which one usually***

waits in vain. His Cavaradossi was the most convincing performance that I have heard from him. Der Opernfreund, December 2008

2009

Cura sang his first Calaf in Verona in 2003; nearly six years later, he brought his mysterious prince to Covent Garden with an interpretation that challenged the romantic idealization of the past and offered instead a dark-hued, eminently masculine reading relying as much on Freud as it did on Puccini.

Turandot, London: Here are outsized severed heads spilling silken blood from their mouths, masked grotesques wielding torture implements and a faceless, brown-smocked chorus whose calls for the executioner are much more convincing than their pleas for clemency. Stylized the violence may be, but this is a theatre of cruelty in which only an action man such as José Cura's Calaf can possibly prosper. Rather than some milksop princeling, Cura plays the part very much as if Andy McNab had stumbled into imperial Peking: that he's the reason no one's getting any sleep ("Nessun dorma") is clearly a source of macho pride rather than a cue for a moonlit serenade. Pair his lusty but still nuanced tenor with Connell's Turandot and the result is a visceral battle of wills.
The Times, December 2008

Turandot, London: José Cura as Calaf was on top form, producing some spine-tingling sounds and it was a pleasure that he actually sang "Nessun Dorma" as if it meant something; his sensitive use of vibrato and understanding of the text puts many other tenors to shame and whether displaying his husky baritonal-tenor voice at mezza voce or full throttle, the results were thrilling. Music OMH, December 2008

Turandot, London: It was a good night for José Cura, well suited to the craggy heroics of Calaf, dark and strong in the middle voice and wholehearted in that aria. Independent, December 2008

Turandot, London: *As Calaf, Cura was in fine, outstanding in a heartfelt but never indulgent account of his big aria. He remains one of only a handful of tenors with a voice that can deliver visceral thrills.* Musical Criticism, December 2008

Turandot, London: *Any tenor tackling "Nessun dorma" has the colossal shadow of Pavarotti bearing down on him. José Cura need not fear the comparison. He was once touted as the Fourth Tenor and he certainly has the heft and supreme confidence a successful Calaf needs. As he scaled the heights of "Nessun Dorma," his voice, enriched by an impeccably controlled vibrato, was, like the stars of the text, "trembling with love and hope." Yet it was also rock-solid, more so than the flimsy oriental structure whose pillars he was clutching.* Evening Standard, December 2008

Turandot, London: *Cura's was a subdued unshowy performance befitting with his perception of Calaf as something of an emotionless "bastard" willing to let Liù die so that he can continue to climb the social ladder. His voice is not lyrical but has a burnished baritonal middle and solid top and the culmination of his performance was an assuredly ardent, if somewhat strangely reflective, "Nessun dorma."* Seen and Heard, December 2008

Turandot, London: *If the tenor in 'Turandot' is to be judged by "Nessun dorma," then José Cura has truly passed the exam with the note in Covent Garden. Hot, exciting, yet restrained, the Argentinian shone in the aria that made Pavarotti famous and molded it to suit his voice, adding the cherry to the top of the huge spectacle. A triumph.* El Mundo, January 2009

Stopping in Wiesbaden for a gala performance of *Tosca*, Cura *proved to be a nearly perfect Puccini singer whose voice in piano suggests iridescent colors; in forte, a metal sound may be present. His vocal union with Hessischen Staatsorchester was flawless.* (Main-Rheiner, February 2009)

2009 continued *Stiffelio*, *Carmen*, and *Tosca* in Vienna, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* at the Met in New York, and *Turandot*, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* in Zurich.

Stiffelio, Vienna: *The hapless man of God, Stiffelio, arrived with José Cura and it is certainly one of his best roles: he does not do much yet conveys the internal struggles credibly. Vocally, we have heard the same for some time: passages with real, beautiful tenorial brilliance, and those in which he does not control his voice. Applause.* Der Neue Merker, February 2009

Stiffelio, Vienna: *For José Cura the role of the sectarian priest Stiffelio is an ideal one: he perfectly displays the warmth of a religious leader at the beginning, later the despair during his budding jealousy and the rage of the offended man. Throughout, Cura is always Cura, an extraordinary figure and a unique personality in that he outshines most of his tenor colleagues. Cura not only portrays his character with great sensitivity for human emotions, he obviously also feels them himself! And he convinces vocally, creates nuances and moods with his dark tenor voice; equally convincing his art of expression and phrasing. His wife Lina's brief affair provokes in this brooding missionary a range of emotions far from pious, even a desire to fight a duel with his rival Raffaele. Ovation!* Wiener Zeitung, February 2009

Stiffelio, Vienna: *José Cura appeared as the preacher who was cheated on. Those who do not like him will always knock the effusive style of his singing while those who like him can almost always take pleasure in his intense singing and acting portrait in the role, as happened this evening when he thanked with much applause. To try to bind Cura to a bel canto song line would require a renunciation of intensity and expression.* Der Neue Merkur, February 2009

Stiffelio, Vienna: *'Stiffelio' is a superstar tenor's opera, and Cura has the power, passion, dedication and sheer charisma to pull off a role that is not first-rate Verdi. At forty-six, he can boast a voice in spectacular shape; the slight huskiness that drifts in under pressure in dramatic passages is easily forgiven as an exchange for the moment. There is a ping, a*

squillo to this big, burnished trumpet of a voice that remains virtually unmatched for sheer tenorial excitement.
Opera News, April 2009

Long a favorite at the Vienna State Opera, Cura brought his Don José to the stage for a series of *Carmen* performances in February and March. His interpretation was not that of a character who begins the opera as an innocent and ends as a man driven to violence; this José was dark and brooding from the get-go, a cold, implacable killer who stalked Carmen as prey. Cura brought thrilling depth and rare dimension to the role.

Carmen, Vienna: José Cura sang with unexpected control, and suddenly one felt what is actually in the voice, if it is reined in to meet the part. After an emotionally strong third act, Cura changed in the finale to a desperate, introverted underdog, who begs for love and cannot tolerate Carmen's superiority any longer. Thus the murder becomes the impulsive act of a man with no reason to live begging for one last token of love. Operinwien, February 2009

Carmen, Vienna: At the very forefront is the concentrated power by the name of José Cura: manly and massive is his tenor, but capable of caressing tones. Wiener Zeitung, February 2009

Carmen, Vienna: As to José Cura as Don José, he is at least honest to the fingertips. Certainly, the mezza voce of the "Flower Song" does not make his voice happy, but as soon as he let loose with power, he does so with full commitment and therefore also to full effect. And he is a fascinating actor, especially at the end. Unlike many of his contemporaries in the role he does not transform into a begging weakling who sprawls at Carmen's feet pleading desperately. This José, who in the third act has already made plain how much his honor has been violated by Carmen's behavior, tries one more time to settle things, to give her one last chance: when she pushes him away, he does what must be done without emotion. He stabs her, wipes the bloody knife on his pants and turns away. No whimpering breakdown over the corpse. Perhaps too macho but in any case, a man of honor. A highly impressive performance. Der Neue Merker, March 2009

Carmen, Vienna: *If one accepts that José Cura simply sings like José Cura, then one was also very pleased. This Don José (and by this I mean the character) is never a weakling with major psychological problems as portrayed by other singers, but a proud Navarreser who—while certainly under the influence of Carmencita—walks a certain way that he maintains through the inevitable consequence. This also includes the way he kills Carmen deliberately when she does not want to go back to him. This murder is no impulsive reaction but well thought-through with the consequence that he will ultimately lose his life. Acting is certainly one of Cura's most convincing achievements, but he also presented the "Flower Song" [vocally] with great heart and much feeling. Huge applause at the end.* Der Opernfreund, March 2009

Carmen, Vienna: *There must have been some astronomical anomaly behind the pairing of baroque specialist Vesselina Kasarova and the force of nature called José Cura: the two worked off each other to create an edge-of-your-seat intensity, offering blood-and-guts characterizations while never neglecting Bizet's score. No wimpy mama's boy, this true drammatico dude was unconsciously (or not) wrapping a leather thong around a hand while Carmen delivered her "Habanera," and he was clearly a brute in his lead-up to a staggeringly gorgeous, divinely phrased "Flower Song."* Opera News, May 2009

Carmen, Vienna: *In the role of Don José, José Cura may have wished for someone more spirited and energetic than Kasarova, but it by no means influenced the star tenor's incredibly virile vocal performance and poignant, precisely sung interpretation. On the contrary: Cura is more than reliable and an absolute musical revelation in his present form and with all the vocal and dynamic refinement, which in taste and style is unequaled among his colleagues today. Ovarations for him.* Opernglas, March 2009

Cura traded his sullen, violent Don José for the heroic, stalwart Mario Cavaradossi in back-to-back productions in Vienna:

Tosca, Vienna: *Three artists with extraordinary stage instincts shaped this noble thriller in the 525th performance of this production. José Cura scored points from the beginning as the revolutionary and the lover, especially when facing the firing squad at the execution command, recognizing it as the consequence of the perfidy of Scarpia. The fact he proved, in defiance of his critics, that he is still a serious singer positively rounded off his achievement of the evening. With almost sinewy stretched phrases, concentration, and brilliance in the high notes, he sang the aria and the duet in the first act with the requisite fervor, with convincing despair in the dungeon scene, and hurled an ardent "Vittoria" at the police chief.* Der Neue Merker, March 2009

José Cura managed a quick mid-month stop in Karlsruhe for a gala performance in one of his most iconic roles, the poet Andrea Chénier, before flying to New York to star in two of his most memorable ones, Turiddu and Canio, at the Metropolitan Opera.

Andrea Chénier, Karlsruhe: *An impressive gala with José Cura. The character of the revolutionary French poet is written into Cura's body. He was magnificent in the fiery appeal in the salon of the Coignys when he represents his ideals and before the tribunal when he defends his honor. Also the singing requirements lie extremely well within his vocal chords. He raced from highlight to highlight, crowned by the scene that what might be considered to have taken the honors of the evening, at the beginning of the fourth act, "Come un bel di di maggio," in which José Cura also found the quiet, gentle tones. The audience was wild with enthusiasm.* Neue Badische Nachrichten, March 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, New York: *Cura fared better in the Mascagni work, tapping into the self-hatred that most Turiddu miss, creating an interesting portrait of a somewhat weary village playboy fatally caught between duty and the call of one last fling. His method remains an odd one, but he managed good sound and gave the oft-shouted-through "Addio alla madre" a dynamic variety that made it the more moving. Cura and Komlosi made something more complex*

and real of their long duo scene than I've seen in this staging for years. Gay City News, March 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, New York: ***José Cura has a baritonal timbre but a big bright side. He combined for thrilling duets with mezzo-soprano Ildiko Komlosi in 'Cavalleria' and soprano Nuccia Focile in 'Pagliacci.' His "Vesti la giubba" was penetrating.*** Associated Press, April 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, New York: ***José Cura was in excellent voice and gave a strong performance in both operas.*** New York Theater, April 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, New York: ***[Cura's] voice is sufficiently "brown" to bear the pressures both roles impose with the kind of swagger they demand. The animalism in Cura's sound—brash but vulnerable—sparks the imagination. His Turiddu rocked with chauvinistic testosterone, brandishing portamento like a deadly weapon. 'Cavalleria rusticana' and 'Pagliacci' are incessantly derided as war-horses, but when they are treated with the care that the Met is giving them at the moment, they are exciting to ride again and again.*** Operablog, March 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, New York: ***The Argentinian tenor José Cura, who made his debut at the Met in the role of Turiddu ten years ago, is the draw of this evening. [With] the beautiful "Quel vino e generoso" Cura finds the right balance between dramatic accents and vocal fullness. The rest of the evening saw him ramp up the power, to the delight of the audience.*** Classiqueinfo, April 2009

After his star turn in *Tosca* in Vienna and Szeged, Cura returned to Zurich for their summer festival, headlining in the acclaimed *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* (available on DVD) while finding time to portray Calaf in its popular, updated *Turandot*.

Tosca, Szeged: ***What we saw would have been irresistibly grotesque if the tenor role was not shaped by such a sovereign individual as José Cura. The characterization of Cavaradossi he offered was that of a man who knew exactly what he had to do, who had determined who the enemy was and***

who worthy of affection, who understood everything clearly. Cavaradossi's intense involvement in life grew more human as he faced death: he prepares for it, accepts it, listens and smiles at the woman-child who will never reach his level. Not because he is suicidal but because he had a transcendent vision. Cura uses his voice with masculine savvy. In the bold and glossy deep and middle registers he created a remarkable mix from the barely sung declamation to the broad cantilena, in the high notes the heroic shines with all the obvious naturalness of melody. Some of his solutions require a contrast between heart and beautiful singing but artistic integrity is completely victorious. Muzsika, June 2009

Turandot, Zurich: José Cura was announced as indisposed; coughs and beads of sweat plagued the singer. Nevertheless he was able to inspire and survived to the end in good shape. His "Nessun dorma" was brave and his interpretation was convincing and often amusing. He solved the riddle with a laptop and gave us the best of an earthy and macho but gentle Calaf. The crowd celebrated with enthusiastic ovations. Der Neue Merker, May 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: The premiere's central figure was José Cura, who took on both roles. As Turiddu, Cura was the 'macho' incarnate who, nevertheless, showed surprising fear vis-à-vis Alfio, a carter of higher social standing among the men of this Sicilian village. He performed the "Song to Lola" so forcefully that his intent seemed the assertion of a claim rather than exuding charm. As things progressed, he found the way to piano sounds which stood in contrast to his ringing out, a juxtaposition that fit in perfectly with the conception of the role. Canio was even better suited to the Argentinian tenor than Turiddu. With the sound of sinewy tension and a surprising piano at the end, the tenor saw to a vocal texture and structuring of "Ridi, Pagliaccio" that was spellbinding. Das Opernglas, July/August 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: Opera right out of a picture postcard: Something clicks here. To an extraordinary degree, it is due to the acting talents of José Cura, who

is singing the part of Turiddu as well as that of Canio. Dazzlingly brilliant his voice in the sweeping melodic arches of 'Cavalleria,' remarkably vigorous and lively in the articulation of the drinking song "Viva il vino spumeggiante." Perhaps even more awesome is his Canio: an alcohol-dependent clown, grown old, who is living off what's left of his former assets, and, mind you, does so in magnificent voice. His slight stagger as he exits the stage after the famous "Vesti la giubba" goes to the quick, yes, even more than that, it is heart-rending. Zürichsee-Zeitung, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: This new production is especially noteworthy for the presence of José Cura. His charisma and the force of his interpretation reach full potential in the clothing of Canio, in impressive dramatic crescendo. As everyone knows, the Argentinian is a true stage animal. His "Vesti la giubba" is staggering in its intensity and will remain in the memory, as will his final words which end the opera, launched not as a cry, as we often hear them, but as a nagging complaint, in half-voice, spine-tingling. Concerto Net, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: José Cura turns into a melodramatic anti-hero driven by jealousy in 'Pagliacci.' The transition from play to reality is hardly noticeable with him. The clown who has seemingly been joking just a minute earlier appears dead serious the next; it's of distressing ambiguity even for the spectator with knowledge in the matter. Since Enrico Caruso's interpretation to the latest, the character of the clown is lachrymose, sentimental and full of self-pity. Cura endows him with that also and seems doubly lost in himself exactly because of his physical and vocal stage presence. And it is precisely this 'mismatch' of weakness in character and brute violence that logically, resolutely leads to tragedy. Tagesanzeiger, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: The final quarter hour of 'Pagliacci' was a veritable José Cura show. Everybody got carried away by the Argentinian tenor's intensity and presence: colleagues, chorus, orchestra and naturally the audience. Cura's portrayal of the jealous leader of the somewhat shabby troupe of comedians, Canio, in his woun-

ded male pride, in his despair and in his deadly rage was a theatrical event. "Vesti la giubba (ridi Pagliaccio)" is Leoncavallo's greatest aria and a cornerstone of the tenor repertory. Cura charged it with all the drama imaginable. But also as Turiddu in Mascagni's 'Cavalleria,' he showed the bright side of his magnificent and powerful voice—a voice of substance and foundation, which also has a smooth, rich flow—in conjunction with the complex and intelligent employ of vocal resources: not only loud and extroverted, but differentiated in the service of two very different roles. Thus Cura downgraded everyone to supernumerary status. Compared with Cura, the other singers had a hard time. Die Suedostschweiz, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: Here José Cura was really in his element. Even his initial entrance onto the stage with "Un grande spettacolo" was already incredibly powerful and intense, followed by a keen and haunting interpretation of the cantabile "Un tal gioco." Cura gave shape with thrillingly poignant vividness and forcefulness to the most famous scene of this short opera, "Recitar... Vesti la giubba." As impotent alcoholic, Cura was also a totally convincing actor. Art-TV, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: The Argentinian star tenor fashions the title role into a character portrait of the very highest order with both his singing and his acting. His cuckolded Canio is from the very start a ruined clown, a wreck, who drowns his disappointment that Nedda, whom has now turned away from him, in alcohol. Fascinating, how the voice assumed a darkly glowing color as it increased in radiant intensity with the eruption of true feelings in the middle of the Commedia-dell'Arte play. Neue Luzerner Zeitung, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: A fireworks display of emotions: the star of the evening was clearly José Cura. The Argentinian-born tenor had taken on the risky venture of interpreting an all too recklessly acting Turiddu in 'Cavalleria rusticana' as well as Canio in the opera 'Pagliacci' after the intermission. His outstanding performance, with regard to singing as well as acting, was one of the most im-

pressive factors in a show rife with emotion. Schaffhauser Nachrichten, June 2009

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: (DVD) ***There are few tenors who naturally fit in a role like Cura in the roles of Turiddu and Canio. He has everything needed to make these characters speak to the imagination: temperament, a rough, raw voice and a lot of drama in both his singing and his appearance. As Turiddu he touches through his intense alternation of forte and piano, especially when he says goodbye to his mother. And as Canio he is even more on track: he is a superficial, thoughtless guy, who breaks through all barriers when he thinks his honor is damaged. Cura's vocals are not always groomed and controlled and his "Vesti la giubba" is quite hurried, but that's not what it's all about. Every note that he brings out is lived through. Moreover, he is a fantastic actor. At the end of 'Pagliacci' he no longer needs his singing; his body language is already penetrating enough. Cura grabs you by the throat.*** Place der Opera, April 2010

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: (DVD) ***Cura doubles as Canio in 'Pagliacci,' playing him as highly intoxicated from beginning to end. Canio staggers about the stage, imbibes openly, picks his nose and blows it on a stranger's cap. Cura's singing is deliberately loose of rhythm and pitch, bizarrely phrased and shaded, because Canio is dead drunk. It's a virtuoso performance in thrall to a conceptual blunder. The violent climax packs a punch, with Cura in ringing voice.*** Opera News, August 2010

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: (DVD) ***The singing in this production is very strong. José Cura's character may be a rat – and is beautifully characterized as such – but he has the voice of a lion. He ramps up the emotion to breaking point, both in his confrontation with the abandoned Santuzza and his farewell to his mother. Cura's singing is equally expert and enjoyable in 'Pagliacci.' Clearly, from the moment of his first appearance, Canio's paranoia about his wife's fidelity derives from—and enhanced by—the hip flask from which he is perpetually taking a swig. Whether the alcoholic husband has driven Nedda to adultery or her adultery has***

driven him to drink remains a question as unresolved as the old riddle of the chicken and the egg. Cura's interpretation downplays sentimentality and histrionics – but even without any Gigli-like sobs, "Vesti la giubba" retains all its emotional heft. Highest recommendation. Music Web International, 2011

Cura started the new performance year teaching a master class for young singers in Nancy, then conducting a concert with full orchestra to provide the complete opera experience for these artists. 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 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. 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."*

Following the success in Nancy, Cura starred in a production of *Samson et Dalila* in Liège:

Samson et Dalila, Liège: Argentinian tenor José Cura was allowed free rein and for good reason: the singer knows the role thoroughly, he brings to it his deep, warm timbre and, despite some reservations in style and diction (his French speaking is perfect), he embodies, by his immense talent, his charisma, and his generosity, the trump card of the production. La Libra, September 2009

Samson et Dalila, Liège: José Cura's Samson: powerful, carnal, of real presence. If in his first 'speech' exhorting the Hebrew to free themselves from their chains the tenor mishandle the accuracy and the line of singing, in the second act as a man torn between his God and Dalila he revealed mastery of his broad, solid tonal range, from the low register to the high. Cura unleashed in the third act, painfully, tragically. Le Soir, September 2009

2010

The new year saw Cura back in New York for the month of January as he re-introduced *Stiffelio* to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera after an absence of two decades; the production featured a traditional Giancarlo del Monaco staging.

Stiffelio, New York: ***The ensemble's stretta, both forcefully kicked off by Cura, were as grand as they should be. Cura's brooding Stiffelio, bent on divorce, and Sondra Radvanovsky's contrite Lina capped their portrayals with a penultimate scene of full intensity, and emotional subsequent scene in the church, suggesting the peace they have made with each other.*** Q On Stage, January 2010

Stiffelio, New York: ***'Stiffelio' itself comes off remarkably well. I don't remember being nearly as taken with it when the production was new in 1993, but now it seems like time extremely well spent. The title role's piety doesn't exactly harness Cura's sex appeal, and vocally, he has reestablished himself as a major Verdi tenor.*** Philadelphia Inquirer, January 2010

Stiffelio, New York: ***The Met put together an exceptional cast to make a case for this unjustly neglected work. In the title role José Cura conveyed the minister's emotional anguish with deep poignancy. From the brilliance of scholar Kathleen Kuzrnick Hansell's restoration of the score to the directness of Giancarlo del Monaco's staging to the overwhelming power of the singing, 'Stiffelio' is an especially impressive triumph for the Met.*** New York Daily News, January 2010

Stiffelio, New York: ***The title role is sung by José Cura, who reins in his burnished, sometimes wild tenor voice to give an intelligent and effective performance.*** New York Times, January 2010

Stiffelio, New York: ***The Saturday matinee I attended was sold out and the cheers from the packed house would have probably continued until the evening performance—had the houselights not come up. Tenor José Cura as the deeply con-***

flicted title character headed a first-rate cast—all of whom sounded glorious and all of whom acted persuasively. Proactive Leadership Mag, February 2010

Stiffelio, New York: ***José Cura offered a bravura tenor version suitable for the character in moments of anger, which sometimes resulted in a certain lack of refinement and prevents him from achieving enough lyricism in those moments when the shepherd must keep his moderation. His total dedication and fierceness of delivery provided for an undisputed ovation at the end.*** HoyesArt, February 2010

Stiffelio, New York: ***José Cura was cast in the title role, one of Verdi's most layered. He sang it with great variety, from amiability in the barcarolle to jealous rage to chastened transfiguration; Cura gave a thoughtful, rounded characterization. His voice sometimes sounded worn but he never sang beyond his means. He is also one of the very few singers who know just how softly it is possible to sing at the Met, and his "opposto è il calle" was real bel canto.*** Opera News, April 2010

In February, Cura was back in Vienna with *Tosca* and the Italian "sisters" in a repeat of his earlier acclaimed performances.

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Vienna: ***The evening turned into a very personal, entirely individual triumph for José Cura, deservedly so—he is the King of Verismo. Whoever expects him to be in "line" with beautiful singing and bel cant-esque languishing will always be disappointed; however, when it's a matter of dedicating both personality and voice totally and completely to a highly dramatic role (which also makes him into one of the best Don José of our stages), he can hardly be topped by anyone at present. In these two roles, his singing was certainly not flawlessly clean, but always gripping, captivating with its unsparingly trumpeting, unwavering high notes and remarkable power. Cura's Canio is driven by aggressive restlessness and anxiety; he lives with his suspicions about his wife, determined to find them verified. He is not an elevated-heroic-tragic figure but rather a seriously affected, wildly-suffering man; he is also one who does not break down in despair at the end but instead***

looks at the dead with almost disaffected astonishment, asking himself what he has done. The audience was wildly enthusiastic, and as far as Cura is concerned, rightly so. On this evening, 'Pagliacci' sagged hopelessly whenever Cura was not on stage. In short, if it had not been for Cura's triumph as Primo Uomo of Verismo, one would have dealt merely with average repertoire once again, the kind which appears to be prevalent these days. Der Neue Merker, February 2010

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Vienna: One cannot reproach José Cura after this evening with the Siamese verismo twins 'Cavalleria rusticana' and 'Pagliacci:' he unconditionally threw himself into the battle. He lent the unfaithful Turiddu, which he played for the first time at the Staatsoper, the same impetuous contours as he did the cuckolded Canio, whom he creates as a great clumsy Super Macho. The audience loved [his performance] and cheered this Olympian with volume. Die Press, February 2010

In March, Zurich showcased Puccini's *La bohème*, a work Cura had never before performed. Demonstrating his ability to adapt to roles that might—on paper—appear less than congenial, this versatile tenor molded his supremely masculine voice and shaped his physical presence to suit the character of the young, struggling, vulnerable Parisian writer. The puppy-like devotion in Act I, the anguished uncertainty and fear in Act II, and the emotionally devastating realization in Act III marked the portrayal as one of Cura's most thoughtful and emotionally impactful.

La Bohème, Zurich: I could not choke back my tears: I could not even imagine a more touching and complete rendition of Rodolfo than the one José Cura has given on this Sunday afternoon. The quality of his voice, now much more mature and baritone-like than it was some 10 years ago, is hardly overestimated. The top may be not as amazing as it used to be but the capacity of penetrate in the heart of the role and convey feelings is fantastic, and something you can't measure. I was struck by his last words after Mimi's death: this is real verismo! Place de l'Opera, March 2010

Cura began the summer season in Berlin, where he introduced an aggressive, brutal Calaf and then followed with his tortured and vengeful Otello in a new, controversial production set in a refugee camp.

Turandot, Berlin: Calaf is a role that is ideally suited to Cura's voice and his athlete's physique. The very first confrontation of the two (in Act 2), turned into the highlight: two people of steel with equally steely but never painfully harsh voices met eye to eye. It was magnificent singing, making the hair on your neck stand on end, afterwards rewarded by a strong burst of applause. And Calaf? He fits into this brutal environment. He falls for Turandot immediately and without restraints. He, who has experienced violence himself due to being exiled, seems to be attracted more by Turandot's delight in the senseless exercise of violence than by her much vaunted beauty. He comes as conqueror who wants to break her resistance. This does not look like love. In the third act, Cura showed himself intensely passionate. José Cura was celebrated abundantly with bravos and standing ovations. Der Neue Merker, May 2010

Otello, Berlin: The magnificent cast assembled for the premiere, one that would do honor to any opera temple with global reach. The quartet and the duets in the two middle acts, the love scene between Otello and Desdemona at the end of the first act, and in the fourth the murder as its negative inversion, those were true, fulfilled moments of Italian operatic singing, of the kind which has come to be all too rare. Beautiful, sublime, bringing time to a standstill. Vocally, José Cura's bronzed Moor intelligently turns his tenoral deficits into vehicles for expression. Where he formerly used to spill his tonal testosterone in a blasé sort of way as Supermacho he now, as a broken yet sure-footed battle-seasoned warrior, strives for depth in character, and successfully so. When he, growing ever more crazed with jealousy, tears Desdemona's handkerchief into strips in full view of the crowd and knots those strips into the rope, with which he will later tie her to the bedpost, right then everyone else seems suddenly cut out of the picture as if by some zoom motion. Der Welt, June 2010

Otello, Berlin: *José Cura was a full-bodied, warm-blooded Moor of Venice. Heroic and vengeful, with a possessed look in his eyes, he was consistently fascinating to watch and listen to.* Opera News, September 2010

Otello, Berlin: *José Cura in the title role is an event! Beginning with his "Esultate," he traverses his role tour de force style and has terrifying presence both vocally and physically. There is no way Desdemona can escape him, berserk as he is in his infantile thirst for revenge. The audience enthusiastically celebrated this exceptional singer.* Die-Mark-Online, June 2010

Otello, Berlin: *Otello sobs and sings and moans —and shoots; for, at the Deutsche Oper, the jealous general indeed does not stab himself but rather puts a gun to his belly. After four acts a storm of cheers over the singers. The few intimate moments when he is alone with Desdemona are among the most subtle, uplifting ones of the premiere. There, José Cura and Anja Harteros convince as opera's new perfect couple.* Financial Times Germany, June 2010

Otello, Berlin: *The American Patrick Summers hits performers and audience over the head with the full force: a man of instrumental effects, as long as they have much bang about them. And for that, Verdi affords many opportunities, and he can get away with it, when he has a super-great heroic tenor like José Cura at his disposal. Cura takes advantage of many an instant for explosions of overwhelming dramatic power.* Berlin Morgenpost, June 2010

Otello, Berlin: *José Cura is convincing both as tender and affectionate lover and as berserk madman half-crazed with jealousy. He doesn't go for continuous beautiful singing but for expression. Now and then, he delivers harsh attacks, sometimes even allows his voice to growl and hiss. Entirely different: his first private time together with Desdemona at the end of the first act. In "Gia, nella notte densa" Cura fascinates with his mellifluousness and dark bloom.* Der Neue Merker, June 2010

Otello, Berlin: ***How should one come close to portraying this internally destroyed man on stage? José Cura's singing reflects this character and his psychological destruction impressively. The striking, powerful-dark tenor voice is working very hard, and the voice gesticulates as potently as the actor on stage. Together, this brings a great expressive power to the character that produces impressive climaxes that threaten to tear the very fabric of the musical phrases themselves.*** Berliner Zeitung, June 2010

Otello, Berlin: ***José Cura is viewed as the star of this production and, it has to be said, tenors who can do justice to Verdi are few and far between. As Otello he is in his element. This was an acting tour de force from Cura and he certainly negotiated his way around the notes with apparent ease. At one point when he is preparing to kill Desdemona, he sings with Harteros' head virtually in his mouth, reminiscent of a great golden lion, toying with its prey.*** Opera Britannia, June 2010

After Berlin, Cura headed to Italy to reprise Puccini's rarely performed second opera, *Edgar*, in Bologna.

Edgar, Bologna: ***José Cura's portrayal of Edgar gains strength as the character darkens. A less charismatic tenor might sing the entire role better, but really only a stage animal like Cura has a chance of making the character believable at all.*** Opera Today, August 2010

In Karlsruhe in October, the future was introduced to the present when José Cura undertook the daunting task of set and costume design, directing, and singing in a new production of *Samson et Dalila* (available on DVD). Relying on a performance history of over fifteen years as the leading Samson of his generation, Cura created an unforgettable evening.

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: ***Cura was brilliant as Samson, with an exquisitely colored, sonorous, brilliantly shining in the high notes tenor voice. Moreover, he delivered a highly sensitive, multi-faceted character portrayal, as fascinating vocally as in his acting.*** Rheinpfalz, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: *There have been singular opera evenings that are etched on one's memory, never to be forgotten: the first night of Saint-Säens' opera 'Samson and Dalila' at the Badische Staatstheater ended with standing ovations and was an absolute triumph for all participants. What an exceptional singer is José Cura, whose Samson belongs with the best! With an extremely powerful, expressive, virile, and ideally supported Italian heroic tenor, he drew a convincing portrait of the biblical hero, whom he also gave a convincing profile through his acting. With utmost élan he threw himself into his role which didn't cause him even the slightest difficulties and whose murderous cliffs he mastered with great sovereignty and distinct technical skills. It is no exaggeration to speak of a great moment of opera, one that will go down in the annals as top-rate at Karlsruher Staatsoper.* Der Operfreund, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: *This was José Cura's evening; he was outstanding in every respect. Formidable was José Cura as Samson, who brought his character into focus with enormous intensity. Masterly and at all times credible, he offered glimpses into the deepest recesses of his character's soul by means of his elastic tenor, with transparency and great sensitivity he outlined the conflict between unshakeable allegiance to God and love of a rival. The audience celebrated the artists with frenetic applause.* OperaPoint, October 2013

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: *Cura shone when singing the emotional outbursts of Samson, his sung prayer for power were of impressive intensity. The audience of the Badisches Staatstheater reveled in Cura's exceptional, wonderfully warm and powerful voice. The applause at the premiere showed real empathy between the singer-director and Karlsruhe.* Badisches Tagblatt, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: *In Karlsruhe José Cura was given the special assignment of simultaneously directing, designing, and singing the lead role. The experiment was successful, bringing a much celebrated triumph to the theater and to the singing-director: the exceptional project lent wings to the ensemble and created an artistic result that would do*

credit to any international operatic stage. As a tenor, Cura left no doubt that he must still be considered in the forefront in the heroic roles such as Samson. In his baritone-like timbre, the dramatic fire of his performance and the sheer impact of his effort, but also the delicate lyricism enabled by his technique, he impressed once more. The second act gave free rein to emotions and brought to the Karlsruhe opera a vocal triumph of the highest level, one which should rank high when writing the history of the theater. Opernglas, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: José Cura would have been called a 'jack of all trades' in earlier days; nowadays he is multi-talented. He offers himself in Camille Saint-Säens' opera 'Samson and Dalila' as director, designer and eponymous hero. And Cura the singer? A fully mature steel-voiced tenor, blessed with the right material who mastered the gestures of the folk hero as well as the desperate lyricism of the humiliated. The ovation at the end, with all the stagecraft of stage, seemed somewhat like an anticipated premiere party. Badische-Zeitung, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: Karlsruhe has a new hero in José Cura. Cura is best-known internationally and primarily as an interpreter of verismo roles and yet he has another passion: directing. For this season, Cura has produced a 'Samson et Dalila' for the Baden audience that was enthusiastically cheered and celebrated at the premiere. Not much was missing for this performance to rank as first-class on the international opera market. A soloist who sings fantastically and directs so the audience loves him, not every opera house has such heroes. Das Orchester, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: This 'stroke of genius' by the composer Saint-Säens overflows with enchantingly beautiful music. The jubilation and cheering for all participants at the end was more than well-deserved. DPA, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: There could hardly have been a more spectacular premiere: the opening night jubilation, which continued during the celebration following the pre-

miere, set a high standard for the rest of the season. Orpheus, November 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: *José Cura, who directs, designed the show and sings the title role, managed an impressive balancing act between the concrete history of 'the way it was' and the generalized interpretation of 'it can happen again.' Cura finely illuminated everything, not only as the main character but in his existential expression in both voice and presentation.* Pforzheimer Zeitung, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: *Cura thinks in pictures that remind of the cinematic wide screen, thereby creating impressive quasi-realism. Enormous, universal applause on opening night.* Opernnetz, October 2010

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: (DVD) *José Cura's spectacular mis-en-scène of Camille Saint-Saëns' opera 'Samson et Dalila' has now been released on DVD [by] Arthaus. In addition to his performance as an actor, which was outstanding as always, Cura set the vocal standards, as for example in the lament of the third act. That one of the visually most impressive productions of the Badische Staatstheater has been captured on DVD is certainly to be welcomed.* Manfred Kraft, 2012

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: (DVD) *Under the passionate partnership of tenor José Cura, playing the title role and directing, this recording of the performance of 'Samson et Dalila' given at the Badisches Staatstheater in 2010 is of a particularly effective dramatic power, somewhere between expressionism and realism. From the start, the fire is smoldering under the embers. So it is that Cura's solar voice, with a clear and warm tone at once, convinces from start to finish despite articulation that is sometimes sacrificed to benefit expressiveness. An explosive 'Samson and Dalila.'* Forum Opera, December 2012

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: (DVD) *Cura, with a wild beard and long hair, is a vocally strong, powerful and convincing Samson.* Online Merker, October 2017

Samson et Dalila, Karlsruhe: (DVD) ***This is a very satisfactory performance of the opera in musical terms. Cura as tenor remains an artist of the first magnitude and gives a very satisfying and complete performance of a difficult role. He manages to encompass all the different aspects of Samson. Overall this is a recording of the opera that is well worth hearing, capturing the essence of the composer's genius in characterization and dramatic flow. I am sure that I will listen to it again.*** MusicWeb International, February 2013

Few roles fit Cura better than that of Dick Johnson, the reluctant bandit in one of Puccini's greatest operas, *La fanciulla del west*. This unabashedly romantic piece with its unusual happy ending suits Cura's expansive personality and ruggedly handsome voice perfectly.

La fanciulla del west, Zurich: ***José Cura's singing always has and always will polarize: of course, the dark, almost baritone, bronzed timbre is basically a joy and absolutely right for Dick Johnson, and the Argentinian is naturally also immensely involved as actor and simply looks exactly like the mental picture one has of the character. Beside a fundamentally good legato and several downright chiseled top notes, he was successful with a really good "Ch'ella mi creda," in fact with several beautiful soft sounds and an impressive B.*** OnLine Music Magazine, November 2010

La fanciulla del west, Zurich: ***Whoever has reservations about Puccini's 'La fanciulla del west' should quickly toss them overboard and attend this production with open ears and eyes. A gripping production, fabulous conducting, and a trio of protagonists who could not be bettered provide the electricity in this first Western opera in musical history. José Cura's Johnson lies extremely well in his voice—so liberated, so gloriously blooming in the high notes. The only actual hit in the opera, Johnson's "Ch'ella mi creda" in the third act, is hauntingly beautiful and sung with moving expressiveness.*** Opera Aktuell, November 2010

Manon Lescaut is Puccini's lushly sentimental morality tale of a young woman torn between the love of luxury and genuine love. The staging in Vienna may have been an unsuccessful ef-

fort at updating (to a shopping mall!) but Cura saved the evening with world-class singing and effective characterization.

Manon Lescaut, Vienna: ***But what was almost essential about this evening was José Cura's eagerly awaited Vienna role debut as Des Grieux. [The result was] wildly enthusiastic and tumultuous cheering in the sold-out Opera House over the radiant intensity of his powerful tenor voice. And he was totally convincing with genuine, whole-hearted passion and vitality in both his vocal interpretation and his acting.*** Wiener Zeitung, November 2010

Manon Lescaut, Vienna: ***In the fourteen years since his debut in the house, the Argentinian-born spinto with star appeal has sung many of his major roles here and has matured artistically while retaining his vocal prowess, and improving on certain technical points over the years. This performance witnessed polished verismo singing, slight restraint and impeccable style. This Des Grieux also has the charm of the guy-next-door, credible in his actions and passion. Indeed, it was Cura's contribution which lifted this performance to beyond the purely average.*** Opera Critic, December 2010

Manon Lescaut, Vienna: ***Without José Cura this evening would have lacked any and all "salt", all flavor and zest: it would have been totally flat. Cura's spontaneity as singer was a decisive factor in helping the performance along, even managing to make it positively gripping in the finale. His vigorous, intense, baritonally-hued tenor was flowing time and again with lushly dark euphony, all the while his vocal performance remained basically committed to the naturalistic pathos of verismo, with all the resulting advantages and drawbacks. Cheers of bravo for José Cura.*** Opera in Wien, November 2010

2011

The year 2011 was definitively a *Cav-Pag* year for José Cura. Beginning in Milan with Cura's triumphant return to La Scala for *Pagliacci*, then to Zurich for a sensational reprise of the

diptych before visiting Vienna and ending in brilliance in Copenhagen, each performance adding credibility to the reputation of the Argentinian as the world's leading verismo singer.

Pagliacci, Milan: ***Tenor José Cura was devastating as Canio, the jilted lover-clown.*** Wall Street Journal, January 2011

Pagliacci, Milan: ***The character of Canio, as interpreted by Cura, brought out the heart of all the feelings in "Vesti the giubba" with interpretive firmness.*** Una voce poco fa, January 2011

Pagliacci, Milan: ***The noble and powerful voice of Ambrogio Maestri introduces the show, but it is José Cura who reveals more, risks more and is more emotionally moving.*** El Mundo, February 2011

Pagliacci, Milan: ***On stage a group that is up to the task, starting off with the charismatic José Cura, portraying a superbly intense Canio. As has been known all along, the Argentinian tenor's singing technique is highly personal and definitely unconventional, but in this repertoire he is absolutely a winner and unlikely to be matched. Devastating and enthralling as an actor, Cura uses his burnished timbre for baritone nuances in order to extract every element, every effect out of a part he knows inside out. The high notes are burning and authoritative, the phrasing is pounding and measured. His Canio, aching and wounded, raging, violent, and actually very fragile is a character that stays with you.*** L'Opera, February 2011

Pagliacci, Milan: ***'Pagliacci' was dominated by the large-scale interpretations of José Cura (Canio). The Argentine tenor's phrasing was modeled more to the needs of declamation than to those of pure song. He did, however, act the part with the sort of uncompromising commitment the music calls for, and he undeniably commands plenty of volume and all the notes for the part (including the traditional interpolations).*** Opera News, April 2011

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Zurich: ***Cura sang with strength, his voice was easy on the ear. He sang Canio com-***

pellingly, his voice sounded secure, his high notes without strain or compression. Opera Tattler, March 2011

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Vienna: ***It was an ideal, a storybook evening of opera with big emotions, a wonderful tenor and a fabulous orchestra. José Cura's embodiment of Turiddu as well as Canio is in-depth, intense and expressive.*** Kurier, June 2011

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Vienna: ***José Cura has his fan base, thus a lot of applause for him was a sure thing. Being the bona fide 'stage animal' that he is, his final sequence turned out very well. In the joint scene with Santuzza, there could be no denying his effort to guide his partner-in-song. One has to be very pleased with Cura...Canio is one of the show roles sung by José Cura and this time his fans were not disappointed.*** Der-Neue-Merker, June 2011

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Copenhagen: ***José Cura is a great but controversial and often criticized international star whose image and masculinity works in his favor. Against this background, it was a pleasant surprise to discover Cura shape his vocal lines with well-guided, well-produced strength and dynamic undertones which preserved the beauty and carried the strength in the sound.*** Politiken, December 2011

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Copenhagen: ***Among the singers, the star Argentinian tenor José Cura outshone all the others. He had been flown in for the first four performances with higher ticket prices and was worth every penny, with his musical, easy-flowing phrases and multi-faceted vocals that glided effortless through all corners of the piece. At the same time, he looks physically real, in total synchronicity with his roles.*** KPN, December 2011

Returning to Berlin in May for a 'modern' take on Saint-Saëns' masterpiece, *Samson et Dalila*, José Cura successfully transcended the questionable stage narrative to return fundamental meaning to the work.

Samson et Dalila, Berlin: *The other moment of really great singing was Samson's solo scene at the beginning of the third act. Here, José Cura exhibited the full range of his mastery both as a singer and as an actor; based on excellent technique and breath control, he sang with pure, unbridled emotion, which went straight to the heart. After an initially restrained start, the singer, who has grown and matured in this role over many years, escalated his performance brilliantly, so much so that the big duet between Samson and Dalila was a total delight in its gripping intensity.* Opernglas, May 2011

Samson et Dalila, Berlin: *This gross error of interpretation, bad taste and lack of sensitivity in his stage direction cost Patrick Kinmonth merciless boos and catcalls from the time the curtain fell at the interval to the end in spite of anything the brilliant Argentinian tenor José Cura (a Samson with enormous dramatic power and rich sound) could do to remedy.* Mundoclasico, June 2011

Samson et Dalila, Berlin: *José Cura, now in his late forties, has sung Samson all over the world. He is still a powerful, forceful tenor with burnished tones and thrilling top notes, but his phrasing can be confusing and the results uneven. He had moments of transcendence and heroism. He really came into his own in his Act III lament and prayer to God. He projected anguished, almost cantorial tones and attacked this exquisite music with tormented, fearful precision. The evening concluded with generous ovations for the singer.* Opera News, August 2011

Otello, Concert Version, Santander: *Verdi's immortal 'Otello' has returned to the Sala Argenta to inaugurate the 60th 'Santander International Festival' on a night that marked the festival's first sold-out event. All this was taken into account on this occasion, in which all the details and nuances which Verdi requires were observed and where in the person of José Cura there was a top-class tenor. On his return to FIS in this third appearance before the Santander audience in five years, the Argentinian singer left impressions of his finely-tuned, focused voice, subtle timbre, and reliable regis-*

ter. He grew to be the heroic tenor who overcame with ease all the difficulties which the role entails. El Diario Montañés, August 2011

Stepping into the role of Dick Johnson for the last time in Zurich (the house retired the production), Cura led the audience in an affection goodbye to the beloved Puccini work. Then it was time to turn his attention to a new staging of *Otello* in which modern politics threatened to overwhelm the timeless story of love and betrayal. Called in the very last minute by the theatre's management due to the indisposition of the scheduled singer, Cura added 11 unexpected performances of the Moor to his calendar while honoring his own scheduled performances of *Turandot* and *La fanciulla del west*:

La fanciulla del west, Zurich: There is profound regret that this wonderful production will now be gone forever. At the end, José Cura turned to the audience and announced—his voice tinged with melancholy—that after ten years, this had been the last showing (of this production). And what a show it was! We had the good fortune to be present at a performance where absolutely everything was right. Almost superhuman: the accomplishment, the level of performance achieved by José Cura. It was only yesterday that he had saved the 'Otello' premiere, and on this, the following evening, he did not spare himself in the least and pulled out all the stops in presenting a Dick Johnson of the very highest quality on stage. Physically and vocally, everything just fit and worked together; his distinctive tenor was able to fascinate with its power and radiance, its confidence and security as well as its sophistication in creating subtle shadings. Oper Aktuell, October 2011

Otello, Zurich: As experienced Otello, José Cura knew how to allow his tenor voice to rage in the low register without it losing its radiant power in the high notes. NZZ, October 2011

Otello, Zurich: In the third act he rose to truly great form, interpreting the monologue "Dio! Mi potevi scagliar" and the entire fourth act with nothing short of an intensity that caused goose bumps. In this final scene, he stole onto the empty

stage in an Arabic robe and committed the murder of his white spouse as a planned honor killing and not as an act of jealousy in the heat of the moment. Oper Aktuell, October 2011

Otello, Zurich: Not even the slightest doubt remained that José Cura has mastered this dreaded tenor part, and that, by virtue of his stage presence, he is also able to charge its every moment with an actor's intensity. The scene with Desdemona in the second act came alive almost exclusively because of his will to expressiveness through acting. Die Südschweiz, October 2011

Otello, Zurich: José Cura brings so much experience to the title role and so much fierce emotionality that one can literally overlook the strangely two-part voice and ignore the 'scooping' or what appeared to be deliberately different emphases: This Otello has something to say. Basler Zeitung, November 2011

Otello, Zurich: As robust as this Otello appears whenever he struts across the stage, brawny in his military uniform, an oversupply of testosterone marking his gestures, it is a weak and thin line he is walking in his position of exalted height. It is in his dark skin that the root cause, the germ of his self-doubt, can be found: tenor José Cura makes that clear right from the start. Far from a radiant heroic tenor, he lifts the tone up. Each note is an act of power and each phrase significant, brimming with well-developed meaning. Tagesanzeiger, November 2011

Otello, Zurich: Cura presented from the outset the picture of a heartless military commander, in whom no Iago was needed to ignite the fire of jealousy. When Otello strangles Desdemona, he does so with ice-cold premeditation. Vocally, Cura is convincing with his secure high notes. Wiener Zeitung, November 2011

Otello, Zurich: There was no lack of heroic metal in the smoldering Otello of José Cura, whose yearning phrasing was actually spine-chilling. Cura sang powerfully, with a true squillante sound that he reduced to soffocato volume when Ote-

llo seemed to lose control. This Otello was a "bloke" of a man who fell all too readily into the trap laid out for him. Opera News, January 2012

Otello, Zurich: Strong performers in singing and acting plus a conductor who knew how to combine intensity and vigor in the orchestra's playing gave wings to this Zurich 'Otello'. The theater had the good fortune to be able to recruit José Cura, whose Otello has set the standard. His dark voice has lost brightness permitting him to portray a powerful hero, but one spiraling downward. Ópera Actual, November 2011

Otello, Zurich: What's taking place in Zurich just now could almost be called a José-Cura-Festival, since the Argentinian tenor can be heard in three roles. In 'Otello' one is moved, smitten, completely under the spell of this stage animal, who charges through this role with the eyes of one possessed, with bulging jugular veins from a cold "Esultate" to an "un altro bacio" of overwhelming tension that compels tears. One cannot ask for anyone better to be cast in this role. Operallo, November 2011

2012

The year began with Cura introducing two of his most accomplished characters to opera fans in gala performances in Wiesbaden and Bratislava. With performances of *Otello* at the Slovak National Theater, Cura also delighted the Bratislava audience by appearing in the operetta *Die Fledermaus*, singing "Nessun dorma" at Prince Orlofsky's ball, just one day before his debut as Otello. Cura followed his bravura performances with a return to Vienna as Cavaradossi in *Tosca*.

Tosca, Wiesbaden: In his appearance as Cavaradossi, Cura offered much in bright and lively stage presence, as well as ample vocal stability and soundness. Wiesbadener-Tagblatt, January 2012

Otello, Bratislava: Cura brought his own mature concept of the controversial character. His Otello is an aging man who,

with a manly exterior and confident demeanor, hides old scars and internal uncertainty. He is looking for redemption in the love of a young woman but instead Desdemona accidentally becomes the instrument of his destruction. All this—and much more—can be read through Cura's singing and acting. He is emotional, not pathetic; he is dramatic but not hysterical. Otello's pain, his doubt, and his suffering are internalized and they are conveyed through Cura's tone and gestures. He keeps the viewer off-balance, impressing as he crawls under the skin. Details are found in his vocal performance, which have been questioned, but Cura would consider that, in operatic terms, to be nitpicking. The singer with the dramatic, masculine, metallic voice did not hesitate to sacrifice the perfect aesthetic tone for a sense of authenticity in his character. SME Kultura, February 2012

Otello, Bratislava: Cura offers a thrilling portrait of Verdi's passionate hero at the SND, alternating between rage, despair, and resignation, his dramatic fund of striking force and with a metal ring in his top. A speak-song interpretative style is also a Cura characteristic so recitative occasionally recall parlando (which would have strict vocal defenders of the Italian school distinguishing between verismo and the late Verdi and permitting it only in the first instance) and he occasionally deviates from the flow and tempo, changing the musical accents according to his own concept. On the other hand, his performance is all perfectly thought out, calculated for maximum effect. For example, when he first sees Desdemona he runs up the stairs like a young man, while at the beginning of the third act he climbs on wobbly (broken) knees. In evaluating Cura's Otello, it is important to be aware of differences in interpretative approaches. On one side stand the singers with beautiful voices, expert bel canto style and lovely legato, which makes listening to these singers a wonderful experience. Cura, on the other side, represents the stage animal, in which the visuals (either physical beauty of acting and expressive skills) play the more important part. Noveslovo, February 2012

Otello, Bratislava: At 49, José Cura stands at the zenith of his career, with fifteen years and over two hundred performances of 'Otello' behind him. He knows at every moment what

the hero experiences, what internal, often pathological, conflict sets him off, how to express quiet emotions of love, jealousy, impulsivity, mental collapse and failure. Cura is fixed on stage, the sea-and-storm hardened warrior, the tenderly loving husband who is also a predator, all the barrage of emotions that he must manage. Cura's concepts are extremely polished, both contrasting and based on his deep knowledge of the original. It is particularly valuable that the actor's expressive resources are subject to the musical and vocal lines of the situation. Cura's big, serious, almost baritone-tenor has a bronze polish and he has the experience to build the emotionally charged role without compromising in delicate areas. The high expectations for José Cura were fulfilled. Pravda, February 2012

Tosca, Vienna: Equally strong, the vocally muscular Cavaradossi of José Cura. He paced himself well; he sang "E lucevan le stelle" without sentimentality, short-phrased and aggressive. Weiner Zeitung, March 2012

Tosca, Vienna: Surprising that José Cura succeeded more than once in overtaking the music director and the State Opera orchestra: The Argentinian, all pride and vigor as always, offered the fastest Cavaradossi ever. The high piano places of the first act are glossed over swiftly; just as fast but more impressive and solid: the "E lucevan le stelle" in the final act; thrilling —the moments of attack such as the "Vittoria" in the second act. Der Standard, March 2012

Cura entered the summer months with the Berlin production of *Otello*, this time mounted in Luxembourg, followed with *Tosca* in Cologne and Stockholm, and a reprise of his open-air *Pagliacci* in Cesky Krumov.

Otello, Luxembourg: Cura lets his character descend bit by bit into delusional madness, and the less he presents a hero, the more intense becomes his portrayal of the role. Where he does not force and roar, but rather characterizes with vocal nuancing, he gives evidence of what has taken him to the world class tier of tenors. His desperate monologue "Dio! Mi potevi scagliar" is an experience that gives one the shivers.

At the end, the audience heaped extensive applause on all participants. Volksfreund, May 2012

Tosca, Cologne: Why Cologne Opera's new production of 'Tosca' is attracting large audiences is a no-brainer. Puccini's "tawdry little shocker" is always a cash-cow, and on 31 May the performance boasted the extra draw of star tenor José Cura, in town for a one-night stand. A dressy crowd and lots of opera insiders showed up to be dazzled. And dazzle he did. I can't remember the last time I heard a genuine Italianate tenor sing Cavaradossi, and it was a pleasure to hear a real deal in fine voice. Hitting his stride from the start with a heartfelt "Recondita Armonia," he later belted out a leonine "Vittoria!" and topped off with a theatrics-free "E lucevan le stelle." Cura is unique among star tenors because he can act convincingly, even when he's unfamiliar with the staging. Operablog, June 2012

Tosca, Stockholm: In the third act, Cura demonstrated why he is among the world's best tenors today. It was a great stage experience, truly amazing, a completely magical experience and a truly grand finale. You have to congratulate opera director Birgitta Svendén on engaging José Cura, for his involvement was enough to lift the other singers to a higher step. Kulturemagazinet, June 2012

Tosca, Stockholm: Here comes one of those annoying reviews of something that it is now impossible to see. Be that as it may, rarely have I seen a more honest, true-hearted "E lucevan le stelle," an aria which has been a showcase song for tenors in tails in order to please arena audiences with displays of their spectacular singing. Here is what it's about: Cavaradossi is to be executed. José Cura sits down ponderously and writes. There is no flapping of arms; there are no artificial facial expressions; there are no unnecessary props (he moves them gracefully away). There is only this man's love and despair. Cura has no need to be put into a scenographer's vise in order for us to understand that his character suffers. He does it so well anyway. Expressen, June 2012

Pagliacci, Cesky Krumlov: The star of the evening, José Cura, did not disappoint. He showcased the virtues of singers in

his class—color, beautifully centered sound entirely within the richness of tone so typical of authentic Italian school! The high notes were sung easily. The fullness of color was reach by intensity, not force. He sang as easily as if he were speaking, really without the slightest pushing of his voice. His acting was controlled. Cura and the famous aria remained without false pathos. Impressive. The final applause was proof of satisfaction of a pleasantly spent evening from the numerous spectators. OperaPlus, August 2012

Cura continued his multi-platform approach to performance by directing, staging and starring in *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* in Liège in November. This immensely likable production, with its colorful sets and thoughtful characterizations, was an excellent showcase of Cura's strengths as an opera director and set designer: fidelity to the composer's intent, attention to detail, musical intelligence, and dramatic originality.

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Liège: There's still the two-fold embodiment by José Cura of the jaunty spoiled child and the soul-stirring actor, deposed and finished. An impressive lower range, a haunting middle range, and a valiant height: the brilliant display of passion and the heroism are both there. But what's especially striking is how truly human the two characters are: Turiddu's anguished remorse and Canio's solitary distress are emotions that hit dead center, because these passions always mirror a reality which pervades every part of the staged work. Le Soir, November 2012

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Liège: [Cura] sang the part of Turiddu as well as that of Canio/Pagliaccio. At the end one could really cheer wholeheartedly; the audience made its enthusiasm known in a 20-minute ovation. Der Opernfreund, December 2012

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Liège: The wild, the excessive, the being-in-turmoil remains Cura's constant companion, even in restraint; thus a scathing glance, a tender gesture, an abrupt turning away suffices for the almost 50-year-old to conjure up with small gestures the great drama about love, jealousy, infidelity and murder. Also in his singing, Cura aims for the existential, the cry or shout. Su-

rounded by an ensemble, well cast without exception, the unmistakable quality of Cura's voice finally blossoms out in the overwhelming forte of the well-known arioso "Ridi, Pagliaccio". The sobbing, the scooped notes —here what at other times is suspected of being Kitsch, attests to the top grade special category of this exceptional singer. The Liège audience, applauding enthusiastically, will surely remember the evening still for long time. Aachener Zeitung, November 2012

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Liège: ***This touching, picturesque and human show rests on traditional, but skillful and clever acting that is sensitive and always situation-appropriate. This was a production of great audience appeal and worthy the reputation of the Opera Royal de Wallonie.*** ConcertoNet, November 2012

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci, Liège: ***At the end there is an ovation for all participants that changes to a hurricane when Cura appears. Conclusion: José Cura enchants with a production that leaves nothing to be desired.*** Online Musik Magazin, November 2012

Cura finished the year 2012 and started calendar year 2013 with a stint in Berlin as Don José at Deutsche Oper.

2013

José Cura started the calendar year in Catania, where he conducted seven performances of *Un ballo in maschera*. In March, Cura debuted as the great Moor at the Metropolitan Opera—preceded by a last minute request by Met management to step into the role of Don José in the Met's production of *Carmen* the day after landing—and dazzled the appreciative audience with his virtuoso performance. From his powerful "Esultate" to his heartbreaking "Niun mi tema" the Argentinian thrilled with his voice, his acting, and his presence.

Otello, New York: ***On Monday night 'Otello' returned to the Met with important new singers in all the leading roles. This***

Otello is equal parts brute and dupe. Mr. Cura's voice matches his brawny physique: when sheer, soaring power is called for, he has it for sure. In fits of anger, he sings with chilling, half-shouted intensity. And in the Act I love duet, he inflects ardent phrases with dusky vocal colorings and richness. New York Times, March 2013

Otello, New York: With a popular opera by Rossini already co-opting the title OTELLO, Verdi momentarily thought about calling his work IAGO, after the story's villain. But then, he'd never seen José Cura's portrayal of the title role. It's a risky, over-the-top performance, a freight train going full throttle over a cliff and totally exciting to watch, even when the tenor's control occasionally veered off course. It was mesmerizing. Broadway World, March 2013

Otello, New York: Sauntering onto the stage in all his glory is the unwitting pawn of all that is dishonorable: Otello. Played in black-face by the unconquerable tenor, José Cura, Otello's commanding presence is immediately established, as it should be. His authority, his power, and the respect that he garners are all the more remarkable when pitted against his tenderness towards and worship of his new bride, Desdemona. Nothing, not vicious foe or the strategy of the enemy, undoes Otello more than the thought that his wife is cheating on him and making a cuckold out of him. Cura writhes, sobs, and feels acute pain as each false piece of evidence against Desdemona is brought before him. Cura's anguish is always compelling. 'Otello' reigns as one of the jewels in the crown of the Metropolitan Opera's current season. Theater New York, March 2013

Otello, New York: Cura's singing fused gloriously with his acting. While the role of Otello is known for the strength and power it requires, Verdi's writing for the tenor is mainly piano throughout. Cura observed this marking continuously, creating a greater sense of tension and making his forte outbursts shocking and powerful. The top notes were all there with no sign of discomfort or difficulty; from a technical standpoint, this guy was truly a man in complete command. He sang elegantly when the music called for it; his rendition of the opening "Già nella notte densa" featured

a delicate legato. His most powerful moment, however, came in the final "Niun mi tema." As he watched over the dead corpse, he sang so gently that his eruption at the first "Desdemona" was heart wrenching; he almost seemed to be desperately trying to bring her to life. He followed that one with a hushed repetition of her name, an acceptance of her death. The ensuing "Ah! Morta!" was an anguished cry of desperation and it almost felt as if Cura was actually weeping hysterically on stage. As part of the 200-year celebration of Verdi's birthday, this performance of the venerable masterpiece was a glorious present to the celebrated composer. Latinos Post, March 2013

Verdi's rarely performed opera *Stiffelio* has been a welcomed companion in Cura's journey across the world's major opera stages. He debuted at The Royal Opera House Covent Garden in 1995 in the role, carried his tortured, complex minister to Zurich and Vienna, then to New York's Metropolitan Opera and finally brought his insightful characterization to the prestigious stage in Monaco.

Stiffelio, Monte Carlo: In a role he knows thoroughly—he made his debut at Covent Garden in 1995—José Cura is once again unreservedly involved. The incarnation is striking, overwhelming. Diapason, April 2013

Stiffelio, Monte Carlo: In the title role, José Cura shows himself to be dramatically convincing (as expected). Vocally, Cura always displays an incredible vocal health in a central range that never fails even with the high notes, allowing him to take care of his singing line, a rare happiness for the ears. ConcertoNet, April 2013

Stiffelio, Monte Carlo: The famous Argentinian tenor José Cura plays Stiffelio with dark staining of his masterful voice, suggestive phrasing and rare stage personality, giving moral power to this pastor of the Protestant sect. Cura also shows the transformation of Stiffelio: at the beginning of the first act, when he receives the papers compromising his wife, he is ready to forgive but by the end of the same act he is suffering the negative emotions of a wounded man. True

forgiveness will only be possible in the third act, when Stiffelio discovers his true mission. Maestro, May 2013

Stiffelio, Monte Carlo: The Argentine tenor José Cura made his Covent Garden debut in the role of Stiffelio and now that he is older, the role fits him like a glove. Stiffelio is not a 'jeune premier' who, like so many Verdi heroes, is head-over-heels in love with the soprano and making great love declarations. Rather, he is an older, married man who—carefully expressed—finds disappointment. Cura has a dark, baritone voice that perfectly fits with the dark story he tells in the first act, in which he speaks of the great sinfulness he has seen during his travels. He still does not know that sinfulness has already crept into his own home. Viva Verdi! Opera Magazine, April 2013

Stiffelio, Monte Carlo: It is not enough to have great voices to save 'Stiffelio.' What is needed is the addition of soul in the heart and throat, a frankness, an urgency, a dramatic momentum (the famous Verdi slancio), otherwise it falls back into the routine of note for note, making the staging do the rest. Invested like no other, carrying on his shoulders, from his entrance, of the sins of the world and that of his wife's to come, José Cura, transcendent, brings to the title role a valor, a generosity, a brightness of timbre, a bite, a cast-iron professionalism. Sortir, April 2013

Stiffelio, Monte Carlo: In the title role, José Cura offers a profusion of very moving operatic accents and rare intensity. The vocal structure and tonal richness of the Argentinian tenor assures a stage charisma where the exigency of the spiritual vies with the ardor of passion—and this he offers from his first appearance on stage to his ascent to the pulpit at the end. He collapses at the end of Act II in a mystical prayer with an emotional paroxysm that literally seized the audience. Musicologie, April 2013

Following an acclaimed run as Andrea Chénier in Vienna, José Cura portrayed his enormously complex and appealing Otello in three capital cities. He headed to Buenos Aires in June to do triple duty as tenor, set designer and stage director, crafting a production of *Otello* for the Teatro Colón that was declared

“passionate and gripping” (Seen and Heard International) and then returned to Vienna for not-to-be missed performances as Otello in September and October. His final stage appearance for the year was in Berlin.

Andrea Chénier, Vienna: ***For this part, José Cura has found a way to make for a satisfying experience for the audience, which rewarded all of Cura’s arias with frenetic applause. In “Come un bel dì di Maggio” he opted for a start in a light and un-operatic, almost Lieder-like approach that worked well.*** Bachtrack, May 2013

Andrea Chénier, Vienna: ***A great tenor, soprano and baritone are required for a successful performance of this work. The Vienna State Opera provided the goods. Argentinian tenor José Cura proved to be a passionate Andrea Chénier.*** Jerusalem Post, June 2013

Otello, Buenos Aires: ***Tenor José Cura had a very good performance, demonstrating possession of a wide palette of tones and colors used to construct a more melancholic than alienated Otello... A final, warm recognition was awarded to the singer.*** Cienradios, July 2013

Otello, Buenos Aires: ***Cura is tall with a commanding presence, as befits the role, and vocally portrayed the varying emotions of Otello well. The applause at the end was well deserved*** Seen and Heard International, July 2013

Otello, Vienna: ***There were some not-to-be-missed performances last evening in Verdi’s ‘Otello’ at the Staatsoper. José Cura was authentic as the powerful, paranoid commander Otello. His interactions with Iago were dramatically effective, as was his mounting jealous rage towards Desdemona. His ominous ‘Diceste questa sera le vostre preci?’ was particularly gripping and wonderfully executed. Cura received frenetic applause and numerous curtain calls.*** Bachtrack, September 2013

Otello, Vienna: ***Cura’s appearance is a definite forte, with his curly grey hair and white beard underscoring his striking***

features and formidable stage presence. OperaCritic, September 2013

Otello, Vienna: ***As a jealous Otello, José Cura vocally scored with beautiful piano tones and light parlando.*** Kurier, September 2013

Otello, Vienna: ***José Cura is obviously Otello for any of Vienna's Verdi anniversaries. As was the case more than twelve years ago on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the composer's death, one experiences Cura's known mannerisms in the dramatic passages, primarily his highly idiosyncratic treatment of the rhythm and subordination of the vocal line to the regularities of breath length. But the tenor comes into the love duet, into the monologue of the third act and into the finale without those habits and makes his personal role profile understandable: from the beginning this Otello is not the short-tempered and charismatic commander, but rather a man so weary from an exhausting military expedition that he is too easily entangled in the jealousy drama of Iago. Cheers to José Cura.*** Die Presse, September 2013

Otello, Vienna: ***José Cura, the Lion of Venice, at first wanders across the stage as if tired of the battle that he finds himself thrown into; he sounds dull, overwhelmed, forced. But as the fates stir the figure, despair and outrage shine radiantly and steadily. [Not only] fans are encouraged to go to a performance because of him.*** Der Standard, September 2013

Otello, Vienna: ***Otello (José Cura) wins on merit—a moving, disturbing portrayal, magnificently sung.*** Vienna Operareview, November 2013

Otello, Berlin: ***Thrown into the sound turmoil the couple formed by José Cura (Otello) and Barbara Frittoli (Desdemona) proved to be of the highest level. José Cura combines vocal valor with accuracy in acting. His impulsive character is all the more credible since the deus ex machine Iago is cold and calculating.*** Forum Opera, November 2013

2014

José Cura started the year with a triumph in Stockholm as Andrea Chénier, then moved from strength to strength as he portrayed Mario Cavaradossi, one of Cura's very best roles, Otello, and Dick Johnson, all while offering a generous number of enticing concerts between acclaimed opera performances.

Andrea Chénier, Stockholm: ***Sweden is sadly devoid of internationally-accepted tenors in the younger generation. As a result, the opera has not hesitated to turn to the world to invite in quality for the audience: in 'Andrea Chénier,' that was José Cura, already known from Dalhalla. Although somewhat reserved in general, Cura delivered, as many star do, when it is really needed, as in "Come un bel dì di maggio."***
DT, January 2014

Andrea Chénier, Stockholm: ***The world-class Cura is brilliant in the difficult role of Andrea Chénier. It feels as if his strong vocal effort also penetrates the poet's decision to choose love before the revolutionary poetry.*** Sydmarkenyt, January 2014

Andrea Chénier, Stockholm: ***The main attraction is José Cura in the title role. His tenor is very nice, well-assembled and has that kind of strength that is becoming increasingly rare among tenors. His singing [could even allow you] to forget both the direction and the staging.*** Aftonbladet, January 2014

A *Tosca* with José Cura as Cavaradossi is an event: internalizing the spirit of the painter, exposing the soul of a humanist, identifying with the social conscience that motivates the character, Cura delivers a confident, natural performance that offers a strong message to the modern audience. In addition to celebrated performances in Budapest and Bonn, Cura starred in a monumental, televised outdoor performance in Hannover.

Tosca, Budapest: ***The star tenor of our century delighted the audience of the Hungarian State Opera as Cavaradossi: José Cura's name attracted a full house and he created a rarely***

seen success. I could say the ovation was assigned to Cura's name only but I have to admit it was the voice of the tenor that was celebrated by the audience. The Argentinian singer gave a simple performance on the stage in the noblest sense of the word. Cura trusted in Puccini and in his own talent, so he did not try to tune the role with false artistic mannerism; he just sang the music and let it impress. His voice was free from any unnecessary vibrato or roughness or sharp high note. Although I think it is a bit unnatural to hold the frenetic applause for a full minute after the aria "E lucevan le stelle," I do not deny the exceptional beauty and expressiveness of his farewell to his sweetheart. I do not know how he managed to conjure the love scene so completely naturally with (Tosca) bawling just centimeters from his face, but one could hardly approach this goal better. But of even greater importance: Cura also had a good effect on the other actors. Perhaps the difference from the usual style of performing inspired his artistic partners, who took something from the tenor's naturalness in both voice and stage presence. The music just soared, and perhaps this soaring was "caught" by the musicians from Cura. Opera-Világ, March 2014

Tosca, Budapest: We need such performances! We need them as much and as soon as possible to smooth out the wrinkles of the tormented soul and lift us above the ground a little. Friday's 'Tosca' was an enormous performance. José Cura sang the role of the painter Cavaradossi as a guest artist. Let's just say new colors were added to the production and the interpretational history of the piece has been enriched with a legendary night, one we will talk about years from now and become nostalgic. I don't care if his timbre is a tenor baritone or a baritone tenor as long as he sings so beautifully. His two small arias sounded beautifully, his "E lucevan le stelle" is unique, a curiosity with Cura's sorrowful, weepy timbre. I've never heard "Vittoria!" with such passion in a terrific scene: a world star singer of great caliber singing a leading part on the stage to the audience of Budapest for the first time in the Hungarian State Opera in 2014 in front of a full house, at the peak of his successes. Of course it was José Cura's evening; now Cura has come, seen and won. Opera-Világ, March 2014

Tosca, Budapest: Readers of Momus know I have not been a fan of Cura; now I'm happy to declare that I have never found anything as convincing [as Cura in 'Tosca']. His singing of Cavaradossi was beautiful with pure lines and such intensely we feared he might lose his voice. His voice is in a much better position, up and down the range, than before, much less gloomy, much less dark but he still maintains the singular 'Cura' timbre which has always been the secret of his success; his high notes are clean and bright. Key words in the role have rarely heard such intensity: it is necessary to highlight the superbly acted and sung "Vittoria" scene and the dreaded high note in the first act was also absolutely in place. For me, though, the pinnacle was "E lucevan le stelle," sung with infinite simplicity, Cura sitting immobile at a table but with incredible inner glow. Unforgettable. But the presence of Cura also meant a great impetuous to all the other singers. Everyone could feel it: Cura's presence meant they were involved in something important. Friday night's 'Tosca' was a rare experience. Momus, March 2014

Tosca, Bonn: The Argentinian Cura ranks among the best of his field and he didn't hide it in Bonn. His tenor sounded powerful but never strained. Cura is a theatre person through and through and one could sense it when he sang the aria "E lucevan le stelle." Cura found the perfect balance between theatrical expression and musical beauty. The thunderous applause for him was richly deserved. General-Anzeiger, March 2014

Tosca, Hannover: The expectations had been high: the performance lived up to the promises. Star singers like the Argentinian tenor José Cura (Cavaradossi) impressed with a 'Tosca' which was filled with importance, intensity, knowledge about dramatic passion and truthfulness. Applause and standing ovations in the end. HAZ, July 2014

Tosca, Hannover: Spontaneous applause after the opera's famous arias—Tosca's "Vissi d'arte" and Cavaradossi's "E lucevan le stelle"—not only from the 1500 paying visitors but is also wafting from the thousands of listeners in nearby Maschpark. Even the boldest of optimists didn't expect everything would turn out so perfectly—starting with the

weather through the outstanding qualities of the star guest, José Cura. This 'Tosca' was indeed a spectacular event, opening itself to an audience unfamiliar with classical music and at the same time—note for note, line for line—is filled with dramatic truthfulness and artistic intensity. Even in moments where you can see a cameraman moving back and forth on the stage with his heavy equipment just directly in front of Tosca and Cavaradossi while the two of them are swearing eternal love to each other, down in the audience you can still feel intimacy, intensity. José Cura is a heldentenor who renounces the use of the stereotypical gestures of opera business, who notwithstanding all melodrama also proves to be very strong in soft, lyrical moments. In the end standing ovations. Hannoversche Allgemeine, July 2014

Tosca, Luebeck: In front of the orchestra, there was still one meter of free space left. On this narrow strip, the development of a breathtaking opera took place. At the end of the evening, the audience was rejoicing at an opera made alive with only a few gestures, with looks, with a smile, a sigh. José Cura's tenor possesses mellowness, warmth and volume which are unmatched. His acting skills also put the stamp on the evening. The character of Cavaradossi came alive. Luebecker Nachrichten, July 2014

Tosca, Luebeck: José Cura's voice owns an overwhelming radiant power; his vocal mellowness made not only the ladies' hearts beat faster. In the beginning, you might have feared for his voice—he was flailing a handkerchief and pointed at his throat—but the fearful feeling faded away with each note he sang. You want to hear him again! A memorable experience of opera culture. Kulturmagazin, July 2014

Tosca, Luebeck: Persistent coughing and throat clearing during his first minutes: most of the aria "Recondita armonia" was sung facing the orchestra instead of facing the audience. Obviously and by whatever panacea, Cura had recovered in the second act where his glowing, steely "Vittoria" was the first confirmation. The tenor was completely himself and fully recovered in act three and it was then when nobody could resist his magical-metallic timbre, especially in the very emotionally and ever so softly sung "E lucevan le stelle."

The audience thanked him in the end with ear-shattering cheers. Das Opernglas, September 2014

The premier Otello of the age arrived in Cologne for a series of performances in the opera's temporary home, a space that invited an intimacy not usual for this monumental work. As a result, when Iago questioned Cassio and Otello was forced to step from the stage to hide among the stall seats, Cura created magic as he brilliantly ripped through the fourth wall to make the audience part of the unfolding conspiracy.

Otello, Cologne: ***Otello descends the gangway of his battleship, sings two sentences and everyone knows: the boss is back, the alpha dog has returned to Cyprus. And at the premiere of Otello at the Opera Dome it is clear to the audience from the first note: the international star tenor José Cura is not here simply for the money. He is involved with full power. His Otello is a power plant on two legs. He rages and hisses as the villainous Iago whispers that the beautiful Desdemona has deceived him. And he breaks down when he realizes his horrible mistake. It speaks to Cura's enormous singing skill that he can vocally project this emotional chaos in an absolutely convincing way. Huge applause for Cura.*** Express, May 2014

Otello, Cologne: ***José Cura scores with effortless—in some suitable moments almost steely—high notes and a baritonal virile middle range; he is able to translate the pain of the alleged betrayal but also his fury about it into appropriate vocal colors. In addition to delighting with his vocal qualities, Cura is capable of creating an immense dramatic tension whose crackling could certainly be felt even in the back rows.*** Das Opernglas, June 2014

Otello, Cologne: ***At Salle Pleyel last October, José Cura made a triumphant return to Paris after a 12-year absence. "The silhouette has thickened but the timbre retains its black velvet," we wrote then. In the exclusively Italian program, extracts from 'Otello' demonstrated the art of the Argentinian tenor. The songs selected were limited in service of expression and offered a striking portrait of the Moor. In Cologne, facing the test of the drama and the entirety of the role, this***

Otello loses in haughtiness what is gained in truth. Fragments in the first act ("Esultate!"), the heroic duo in the second act shows problem with power; however, to say that the general of the Venetian army is no longer a dashing officer but a man of a certain age is not an insult to the maturity of José Cura. On the contrary, this maturity is reflected in the way the interpreter can now turn weakness into strength. With mortal weariness, the vocal fatigue makes perfect sense. The lesson is theater. Cornered, the lion struggles, roars, and then, in a final burst of pride, stabs himself. Pride? No, rather the admission of helplessness and despair as evidenced by a "Niun mi tema" so contagiously emotional it was as if we touched in turn the evening of our life. Forum Opera, May 2014

Otello, Cologne: José Cura is a gripping, passionate singing actor with great role experience and presence. In the premiere he threw himself unsparingly into the difficult role, in which he was faultless dramatically as well as vocally; there were plenty of impressive bronze tones of enormous impact but also moments of tender piani, which were less expected. Online Music Magazine, May 2014

Otello, Cologne: It was a double pleasure to see José Cura. In performance, he was able to visually disappear into the nuances of the role due to his numerous interpretations. His body language was always true; his descent from the stage into the orchestra pit where he crept along ears-dropping on Iago and Cassio was particularly impressive. Vocally he was expected be just as present. If, in his "Esultate!" it seemed he had not sufficiently warmed up, the problem was quickly resolved. By the gloriously successful love duet with Desdemona, which he ended with an impeccable high A in piano, no difficulties were discernible. Not since I heard Giacomini and Bonisolli have I heard an Otello who has been able to give so much voice or manage the outbreak of steely power in such a way. Rarely have I been so overwhelmed by the Otello-Iago duet. Unfortunately, the enthusiastic applause of the audience was terminated by the immediate lowering of the safety curtain. In summary for opera lovers: anyone who can make it should not miss this Cologne Otello. Der Neue Merker, May 2014

Otello, Cologne: ***With José Cura one wins an absolutely outstanding interpreter of title character; I would go so far as to say that if there is at present a [definitive] Otello, it is the Argentinian tenor. In his first appearance, “Esultate,” he sounded like a natural phenomenon, the blazing top notes always bright and powerful but at the same time ready for a fine vocal withdrawal if the role required it. His Otello is not an ostentatious tenor hero but a psychologically credible character, always ready for interaction with his singing colleagues, in short exemplary in every possible way. Overall, this was a very satisfying evening musically, with perhaps “the” Otello of the age.*** Der Opern Freund, May 2014

Otello, Cologne: ***Although José Cura is not dark-skinned [blackened], he is an absolutely convincing Otello on stage, one who is easily able to bring the audience under his spell through facial expressions and radiant tenor. The applause started early [with] many bravi calls.*** Opernnetz, May 2014

Dick Johnson remains one of Cura’s best roles, a perfect marriage of vocal requirements, character attributes and Puccini score; his return to Vienna for the role was greeted with critical acclaim and audience ovation.

La fanciulla del west, Vienna: ***Vocally, José Cura as Johnson was in excellent form. The highlight of the evening, the aria in the last act, was performed admirably, the mellowness of his impressive voice still being his trademark.*** Der neue Merker, September 2014

La fanciulla del west, Vienna: ***José Cura is perfect for the portrayal of the character Ramerrez/Dick Johnson. Tall and adventurous-looking, he is ideally cast as desperado—and eye-candy for his numerous female fans. His acting is convincing. He has retained a very beautiful timbre and this time his singing followed the score with discipline. In any case, verismo is at present a very good territory for him and he was hailed by the audience during the curtain calls.*** Der neue Merker, September 2014

2015

Performance year 2015 was marked by a truly international footprint as José Cura traveled from Europe to South American and on to Asia to bring his artistry to a world-wide audience.

Back-to-back performances of his Otello, first in Prague and then in Budapest, started the year on the highest of notes as music lovers in these two capital cities filled the theater for Cura's great Moor.

Otello, Prague: *José Cura, aging in years and graying, is mature and intelligent and he is certainly one of the most interesting (media-attractive) opera stars. He sang ecstatically, especially in the last act. Otello, like no other Verdi character, is a complex role and Cura's acting, which dominated the evening, was extraordinary and unprecedented in my experience.* Harmonie, January 2015

Otello, Prague: *So how big was the celebration in Prague for this current Verdi engagement [by José Cura]? If I may say so, it was definitely exceptional. His presence remains an event. In the third act was the moment that I personally perceived as one of the highlights of the show—the drastic transformation in personality portrayed by the singer was absolutely masterful. His Otello arrives at the scene with the envoy Lodovico almost frantically, during which the Warlord's fury, bordering on symptoms of mental illness, deeply affected the audience. It remains to be added that his portrait of the Moor of Venice rested also on Cura's respectable voice and speech. The initial entry of "Esultate" was difficult... he gave the impression that as a singer he might be having a little trouble with a natural full treble, but the concerns quickly dissipated. By the end of the first act, his voice sounded very balanced in all positions. Despite his excellent natural vocal performance his is not exactly an example of absolute obedience to the style and the score, though Cura still persuades listeners with a voice that is always directly proportional to the performance of a particular role. The tenor feel for language and his ability to work effectively*

with the slightest phrase is an approach I find fully justified.
OperaPlus, January 2015

Otello, Prague: *If you can get a famous singer for a role, one who for eighteen years has been considered the absolute best in the world, it's a win. This was confirmed with the production of Verdi's 'Otello,' who, for the first time in Prague, was the Argentinian tenor José Cura. The tenor showed a rich variety and expressiveness in his voice and register as the brave commander, the gentle lover, and the jealous, murdering husband. There is really nothing like it. He can express love with gentle touches and gestures, suddenly calming his fiery temperament and turning into a little lamb. Although this was the 41st reprise of Otello in the SOP, the presence of the world star gave it the aura of exclusivity. The entire ensemble raised their performance level and showed themselves in the best possible light. Conductor and musical director of the SOP Martin Leginus literally glowed. In a private conversation, Leginus confided that conducting Cura, who is not only a singer but also a conductor and director, is not easy: he knows every single note in the score. That here it worked so well: congratulations! Also confirming the audience was seeing something special was the unusually successful ticket sales: there was no problem filling the last seat in the theater. The public obviously yearns for these types of experiences. The culture of the nation is regressing so tragically, we sometimes think, and then this: the next performance of 'Otello' with Cura is also sold-out.*
Scena, February 2015

Otello, Prague: *The Prague National Opera at the State Theater has presented one of the opera world's biggest names, Argentinian tenor José Cura, in the title role of Verdi's 'Otello.' In the performance, his singing convinced all that his Otello remains an extraordinary experience. The resonant voice permeated the emotions of the character through more than just excellently sung tones, however; Cura is always, in moments of high emotion, willing to sacrifice smooth and flowing sound for persuasive expressiveness, his voice sounding hoarse and strangled with jealousy and rage. One such impressive moment was when he confronted*

the dead Desdemona with a bitter awareness of his guilt. Cura had great success in Prague. Novinky, February 2015

Otello, Budapest: ***The Cura phenomenon: we will never accuse Cura of singing with vocal perfection, but there is such beauty in the natural material. We have no objection to this baritone sound and must admit that Cura's voice is beautiful in the middle and if the high notes are partially done, then they become beautiful by the convincing delivery. But all this could be expected. The surprise was the star taught a lesson in artistic humility—something that could be learned by many of his colleagues. Cura could have simply overwhelmed vocally and a large part of the audience would have applauded him. But he did not do this: in the love duet, in the monologue of the third act and in the finale of the opera, he sang with thousands of emotions, sounds and dynamic shades, true, with technical limitations, but all the while serving the expression. It was just the sensation of Cura being on stage without hesitation; all that he does gives rise to the illusion of naturalness, although it is obvious that his play is a long-term reflection and a result of the precise elaboration of proportions. He was almost flawless, but also particularly noteworthy in a number of elements thanks to the weight of his individuality. Where can we place him in the great Otellos of the world? This is hardly a question to which we can give a mathematical precision answer. Certainly, Cura's many solutions have become forever memorable. Opera Világ, February 2015***

Returning to the opera stage, Cura starred as Don José in the La Scala production of *Carmen*, headlined *Tosca* in Wiesbaden and then offered a brilliant Calaf in a gala performance of *Turandot* in Bonn before beginning his trans-world travels.

Carmen, Milan: ***[Garanca's] sparring partner was an old acquaintance: José Cura. His bravura stage presence was matched by vocalism that alternated between beautiful passages of great intensity to cries at the vocal limits. As Don José, because the character is all passion and no control, he is credible. Operaclick, March 2015***

Carmen, Milan: *José Cura's Don José was world-weary, impassive and often immobile, but in spite of the staging weaknesses, there were moments where the characters' relationships started to kindle. The tension bubbled in a candelabra littered Lillia Pastia's, with José tormented and Carmen burning with resentment at his refusal to desert the army—Cura is capable of shifting cleanly through the gears to find an emotive range.* Bachtrack, March 2015

Tosca, Wiesbaden: *Great enthusiasm was above all inflamed by José Cura who sang Cavaradossi in 'Tosca' twice. The Argentinian presented himself in top form, capturing and maintaining the audience merely by his stage presence. Over the years, his voice has gained even more colours and greater warmth; this was audible especially during the first duet with Tosca. Cura not only relied on volume and effects in the famous "E lucevan le stelle" aria in act three, but delighted throughout with differentiated singing. Thus his intonation in "Recondita armonia" at the beginning of the opera showed pleasing vocal suppleness and good alignment. From his very first appearance he was the natural center of the performance, furthermore proving himself to an excellent team player.* Das Opernglas, issue 7-8, 2015

Tosca, Wiesbaden: *It was a rousing evening. ['Tosca'] requires strong voices to assert themselves against this maelstrom of great [orchestral] emotions and José Cura, prominent as the guest Cavaradossi, soon made clear he is not a whispering tenor esthete but a real man with a virile manly timber and powerful, high note brilliancy. He also finds a way to shine in the tenor-confection "E lucevan le stelle" so ravishing sung that the audience gave him an ovation. In any case, rarely have visitors to the Wiesbaden May Festival been so collectively inflamed as by the experience of this 'Tosca.' The final applause included a standing ovation from screaming fans, shouts of bravo, and broad, enthusiastic agreement.* Wiesbadener-Kurier, May 2015

Returning to Buenos Aires, Cura brought his production of *Ca-valleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, originally created for Royal Opera of Wallonia, to Teatro Colón. Performing a myriad of roles including set designer, stage director, lighting designer, and

tenor, Cura emphasized his ties to Argentina in his use of local color and local music in his intense and inventive production.

Pagliacci, Buenos Aires: ***José Cura, the multiple star artist of the night, showed all his vocal wealth, his expressiveness and musicality in the construction of a perverse, hurt, macho and finally murderous Canio. [Cura was] showered with applause and cheers.*** La Nación, July 2015

Pagliacci, Buenos Aires: ***'Pagliacci' showed us a cruel drama with an excellent performance by José Cura as Canio. A real monster onstage, the voice was sparkling, very prominent and with a credible performance.*** El Apasionado, July 2015

Pagliacci, Buenos Aires: ***In 'Pagliacci,' José Cura put his personal timbre on display with his usual vocal inflections, allowing him to build a very good Canio.*** Mundo Clasico, July 2015

Pagliacci, Buenos Aires: ***It was in 'Pagliacci' (with Cura as Canio) where things got interesting. After the Prologue, a figure in a white masked appeared inviting people from La Boca to witness the show at 11PM. Later, when Canio realizes that he is about to lose his Nedda, he sits and tears off the mask, revealing a deformed face, wounded, still bleeding. This was the real Canio, whose face showed his inner psychological wounds. This scene was very well thought out, intelligent, and one that gave us chills to see. Cura has the vocal notes, and he has them all; what should be noted is how he reaches those notes, which is not always musical. But it is his immense stage presence which produces the greatest effect and it was here that he won his battle all night, because he delivered and because he is an intelligent artist.*** Mundo Clasico, July 2015

Pagliacci, Buenos Aires: ***[Cura's] merits as a tenor became clear in the second half of the evening when he played a fearsome Canio.*** MW, July 2015

Pagliacci, Buenos Aires: ***José Cura offered a powerful and arrogant Canio, with his well-known personal form of emis-***

sion, phrases recited rather than sung, and full high notes.
Una Voce Poco, July 2015

Cura debuted in Beijing in one of his truly memorable roles, Samson. The audience went wild after each performance, signaling agreement with the rest of the world that this was indeed the finest Samson of the age; critics proclaimed him a “god with divinely manifested vocal power and a hero with a golden trumpet”.

Samson et Dalila, Beijing: ***The world famous tenor José Cura, who played Samson, was particularly noteworthy in the evening’s performance. His was a great and glorious voice, full of dramatic tension, resonant as a warrior, tender and confused when bewitched, remorseful and sorrowful after betrayal. Especially in the third act, when Samson sang the famous prison aria “Vois ma misère, hélas,” Cura’s singing vividly depicted his misery, confession, and sincere repentance. When Samson regained his power and suddenly pulled down the pillars, his penetrating voice was powerful, impressive.*** ChinaNews, September 2015

Samson et Dalila, Beijing: ***If you had been at the rehearsal for the B cast the day before, you would have heard a young Latvian with a powerful, dramatic tenor and certainly have been roused to rejoice that here, finally, was a good tenor! But last night at the premiere performance of ‘Samson et Dalila’ with super tenor José Cura, we understood that the Latvian was a mere “mortal” while José Cura is the true “god”! At the end of the opera, as he toppled the temple pillars, he sent out a burst of extremely powerful voice and generated a strong aura that was absolutely shocking to the heart and soul of the audience, so much so that after the curtain opened again there was ecstatic, almost Carnival-like cheer and applause to compliment the true god. José Cura, singer, conductor, composer, director, and photographer, is one of the world’s best Samsons. In the premiere he had a very different sound approach in every scene, so that his Superman-like character was full and strong. His grand, dramatic and explosive sound, enough to restore the “divine power” of Samson, allowed him at the last minute to bring***

down the Philistine temple and kill three thousand Philistines. Beijing Morning Post, September 2015

Samson et Dalila, Beijing: ***In the premiere, José Cura was exceptionally impressive, presenting a complete Samson from the sonorous brave warrior of unquestioned integrity through the man bewitched by flesh, finally transitioning to regret and sadness after being betrayed. Especially in the third act, when the imprisoned Samson sang the famous aria “Vois ma misère, hélas,” Cura’s employed a tearful singing voice to offer a vivid portrait of a the misery in Samson’s heart and his sincere repentance.*** BJWD, September 2015

Samson et Dalila, Beijing: ***José Cura is the tenor playing Samson in the National Theater production of ‘Samson et Dalila.’ In this performance, his singing was most glorious, not only because of the open voice and the high notes suffused in golden light but in its proper dramatic grasp. Such is his vocal power, divinely manifested, that the loud, confident voice, the pianissimo is response to Dalila and the expressions of penance when he cries out to God, are all carefully managed. In performance terms, José Cura, from start to finish, had such boldness about him, whether he encouraged the Hebrews when he sang [“Arrêtez, ô mes frères”] or when he acknowledges his love for Dalila that it was the hearts of the audience that burned....In short, being able to watch ‘Samson et Dalila’ on our home opera stage was good fortune, especially to be able to listen to José Cura sing and to witness his performance.*** Beijing Times, September 2015

Samson et Dalila, Beijing: ***The story of the ‘hero who becomes a prisoner’ is an opera that can be said to be something of a José Cura masterpiece. Over nearly twenty years, in several productions of ‘Samson et Dalila,’ Cura has brought his interpretation countless times to this ancient Biblical story. This, however, was his first visit to Beijing, the first time this tragic hero has appeared on a Chinese stage. [Cura] did not let the audience down. Last night, his voice was full of dramatic tension for each of Samson’s “three faces.” Whether presenting the sonorous voice of the warrior in the first act, the confused lustful tenderness in the second, and finally, in***

the third, the sound of the betrayed, remorseful and sorrowful, Cura's voice was always full of character. Especially in the third act, with Samson's eyes removed and the hero secured within a prison, he sang the famous aria "Vois ma misère, hélas;" he vividly tells of Samson's misery with tearful singing, presenting the abject hero with meticulous accuracy. BJRБ and BJ Xinhua, September 2015

Samson et Dalila, Beijing: *On the international opera stage, it is often said that the dramatic tenor is the hero with the "Golden Trumpet." Last night at the National Theater premiere of the opera 'Samson et Dalila,' world famous tenor José Cura let the Beijing audience experience a truly dramatic tenor with that gold trumpet style: Cura plays Samson as a god and from the first scene his voice was loud and clear. Even though the orchestra filled every corner of the theater with music, Cura let you feel God's power. José Cura has performed Samson for twenty years and his countless performances have enabled him to understand the character so that not every word is powerfully sung; when he faces Dalila's temptation, his voice becomes very gentle. Although the Cura sound is not the lyrical tenor voice we are used to, in its strong flavor and breath control José Cura grasps the emotions of singing, changing up and down. In the Act III prison scene, when he sang the aria "Vois ma misère, hélas," the volume varied from weak to strong, full of emotion when singing pianissimo while at other times making a sound like a mighty bell, making this music strike the hearts of the audience with Cura's voice changes. José Cura showed his strong interpretation on the stage as Samson, displaying both sadness and anger.* Art, September 2015

Cura finished the year as Canio in Bratislava and Mario in Mannheim.

Pagliacci, Bratislava: *At last, the most anticipated singer and hero appeared in José Cura's Canio. From the beginning he played the role as a relentlessly aging but still domineering boss of the ensemble, a man who might not have been willing to murder had he not listened to the jealous Tonio and his own drink-infused temper. And what of his performance as Canio? He is an extraordinary singer and actor, a great*

dramatic tenor—still with the tremendous power of his tenor, in his pride, presence and overall expression and experience. Cura provoked all the SND performers to have a great vocal-singing experience. It was his inspiration and reflection that cannot be forgotten. Canio is not a role that reaches the size and development of the character of Otello but from the beginning Cura demonstrated the guilt, the reality of life, the rising jealousy and the tragic finale of the story, a fire of unusually strong emotions. Operaslovakia, September 2015

Turandot, Mannheim: José Cura, whom was last encountered in Mannheim in an excellent Otello, still has the vigor, the brilliance and the power and the glory for that summit operatic hit “Nessun dorma.” Ten minutes of applause at the end. Mannheimer Morgenpost, November 2015

Notable throughout the year was Cura's expanding efforts as composer, conductor and director: among key events, the Maestro conducted a concert following his run of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* in Argentina; led Mahler's monumental *Resurrection Symphony (Symphony No 2)* in Poland; offered a symphonic concert in Krakow; and directed, and designed costumes and set lights for his inventive *Scandinavian Bohème* for the Swedish Royal Opera which resulted in, according to the Financial Times, 'a roaring success.'

2016

'Otello' was the anchor for an exciting year that saw Cura bring his great Moor to Germany, Spain, and Austria in bravura performances. It was also a year that gave evidence of his ever-growing presence as world-class conductor and elite stage director.

Otello, Wiesbaden: José Cura has completely permeated the role of Otello. Vocally inexhaustible, impressively mastering even the most difficult passages but also able to find the contextual nuance between the feelings of powerless emotional emptiness and glowing rage, he explored the lion of

Venice as a driven victim yet always made him humanly understandable. His dark, heroic tenor soared effortlessly in the high notes but was also resplendent and velvety in the middle register. Online Merker, January 2016

Otello, Barcelona: ***The portrayal of the character by Argentinian tenor José Cura ten years after his last Otello at the Liceu, was impeccable and full of nuances.*** Codalario, February 2016

Otello, Barcelona: ***The tenor managed the difficulties of the role by marshalling forces and using resources acquired over the course of his portrayal of the Moor of Venice, notable in the more lyrical passages and "Niun mi tema."*** El Periodico, 22 January 2016

Otello, Barcelona: ***After more than 20 years of strangling Desdemonas, José Cura still retains good "squillo" in the high notes.*** El Pais, January 2016

Cura made his debut at the prestigious Salzburg Easter Festival as Otello. The abstract, allegorical nature of the staging with its dark, almost impenetrable lighting demanded the tenor bring even greater luminosity to a role that is already challenging in its need to portray power and fragility, fierceness and finesse. Complicating the portrayal was the disparate approach of the design team: in a presentation in which the director was more interested in images, emblems, and disturbing symbols than narrative or character development and the conductor was more interested in clinically dissecting the score than bringing it to life, José Cura somehow found moments in which to introduce warmth, tension, and honesty. Instead of giving in to a production which offered little momentum or understanding by either director or conductor and with no respite from the visually icy calculations of the staging design, Cura breathed life into a devitalized Otello. A DVD of the performance is available.

Otello, Salzburg: ***At the end there was friendly applause for the good ensemble, some boos for the director but in the title role, José Cura won the majority of applause.*** Salzburger Nachrichten, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *José Cura as Otello left little to be wished for.* DNN, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *The choirs remain unfortunately motionless even when Otello smashes through with his "Esultate." José Cura brings the message of joy with dramatic eloquence. This is followed by an exquisite love duet. The fourth act became a poignant revelation, even the most beautiful apotheosis of theatrical music perfection. Cura sings through this act very well, as he does in the monologue "Dio mi potevi" in Act 3—with particular expression, beautiful timbre and warm voice.* Stol, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *José Cura is still a singer who goes to the limit, he has an Italian flair in his voice, and he sings some beautiful melodic lines. As a performer, he is intense; his Otello is a brooder, an intellectual, almost a sage. One is happy watching him—but any opera with Cura would be just as good.* Kurier, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *Jose Cura—as a singer, conductor and director who is intimately familiar with Otello—stepped into the title role and presented his short-tempered commander with solid vocal line. Applause at the end of the evening.* Salzburg24, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *José Cura sings as an aging Otello, broken from the start, the radiant, heroic youthfulness far in the past; he is withdrawn from the beginning. José Cura's tenor still has plenty of brilliance...* Wiener Zeitung, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *Cura is a commanding Otello with his richly colored tenor and both fragile delicacy and fiery ardor.* Südwestpresse, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: *Argentinian José Cura is a reputable tenor and Otello has been one of his major roles throughout his career. His experience, together with a well elaborated technique and strong stage presence, help him to present a homogenous and convincing interpretation. The Salzburg*

Easter festival convinces again with its high quality. Opera Online, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: The singers, led by José Cura as Otello, left few wishes unfulfilled. The great love scene between Otello and Desdemona at the beginning and Desdemona's death at Otello's hand at the end went to the heart. Frankfurter Neue Presse, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: The Festival called on José Cura for their Otello. His is a strong voice, used with a certain intelligence but in need of refinement. Despite the shortcomings, the singer defends himself and the role well: José Cura saved the performance. There is shrewd understanding in his singing; there is emotion; he is truly formidable. In the end, Cura did well despite the problems with the production and an orchestra that was not always helpful. The Wanderer, April 2016

Otello, Salzburg: José Cura shone in the title role. NMZ, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: Here, Otello is tenor José Cura. He looks splendid, this victorious Venetian general, in his performance costume inspired by the pomp of the "Serenissima". And Cura slams his "Esultate!" into the grand Festspielhaus. His vocals will continue to shine but not his costume—by the end, it is nothing more than a penitent's shirt. Whether the production team wanted to convey a message of the "humanization" of the hero through clothing is uncertain; Bousard confuses poetic openness with interpretive vagueness. He lacked the courage to give clear directions and this in turn has devastating consequences for this Verdi's opera. José Cura may have audibly attempted to seek vocal differentiation to the extent possible but since his Otello has been given neither character nor depth of life, Bousard quickly reduces him to a puppet tied to the invisible thread of Iago. However, Verdi and his congenial librettist Arrigo Boito had rejected the idea of dubbing the opera "Iago"—precisely to avoid this direction: the question of guilt and the motives of morbid jealousy leading to the murder of Desdemona must be embodied within Otello. It is only in the

closing scene, with "Niun mi tema", that Cura, who has up to this point been constrained by the director, breaks free with the necessary urgency: as if crushed by the weight of his guilt, he sinks down the wall of the bedroom, brings his expression and voice all the way back to the most personal, and as the perception of meaningless suffering matures, whispers his acknowledgement: "Otello fu." Neue Zürcher Zeitung, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: José Cura, a moving Otello who seems to doubt himself, walked across the stage, haunted by his inner grief, struggling with melancholy in his voice and broad passages with his fate. Bachtrack, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: José Cura convinces as Otello with his colorful tenor, fragile delicacy and fiery glow. At the end much applause, not necessarily fiery but persistent. SWP, March 2016

Otello, Salzburg: (DVD) What I really liked about the singing and acting of the Otello of José Cura was the range, subtlety and depth. Cura presented a fully human, attractive but deeply flawed Moor. He was endlessly fascinating. An earlier Salzburg recording was the BBC's top pick for an Otello video (before this one came out of course). I think this one beats it on every count. OperaRamblings, May 2017

Otello, Salzburg: (DVD) At the head of the cast, José Cura's Otello is in good shape—he's been singing the role for nearly two decades now—and his tenor can still deliver plenty of thrills. Gramophone, August 2017

Otello, Salzburg: (DVD) José Cura gives a persuasive portrayal in the challenging role of Otello, the red-blooded Moorish General... a compelling figure in one of the most significant roles in all opera for an acting singer. Impressive is the tenor's darkish and weighty low range in a role where so much expression is required. Cura's tone is not perfect, especially in his high notes, but his capacity for communication is striking. Convincing is how much Cura makes of this tempestuous character with marked emotional insecurities that eventually overwhelm him, descending into total des-

pair. With José Cura in such fine form the feeling of engagement and artistic integrity is striking. MusicWeb International, July 2017

Cura reprised his popular Canio in Berlin before singing his final Otello of the year in Ljubljana and then Dick Johnson in Hamburg.

Pagliacci, Berlin: ***If you have hired a performer for Canio in Pagliacci at the Deutsche Oper Berlin over the last twenty years, it will have been José Cura. And he showed himself to be in outstanding vocal condition (despite concurrently singing Otello at the Salzburg Easter Festival). His tenor is a distinctive, slightly baritonal in the middle, easy and effortlessly appealing in the high notes, subtly used. From the initial song, he was already marking a psychologically insightful penetration. His next great scene, "Vesti la giubba (ridi Pagliaccio)," turned out to be the undisputed highlight of the evening.*** Der Opernfreund March 2016

Otello, Ljubljana: ***The attraction of the evening was, of course, the guest star José Cura as the Moor. Cura is one of the few plausible current interpreters of Otello, not only for the actor's charisma and acting abilities but also for his vocal qualities. Despite an occasionally forced high note the sound of the voice runs well in the theater, his breathing technique allows him to hold the swings and weaving of the part and the central register is still flourishing. Besides that, he has complete mastery of the part and his Otello is played with the phrasing that places the performance in the tradition that favors the psychological excavation of Jon Vickers tied to the more outward, muscular voice of Del Monaco. Cura excels in making his protagonist's descent into hell both effective and credible and the final "Nium mi tema" proved incisive and poignant, with the aria embellished with a sense of exhausted defeat that emotionally involved the audience. The large and sympathetic audience paid tribute to the show as a great success and the entire company was kept on the stage for a quarter of an hour, decreeing individual and real triumph for José Cura.*** Quotidiani Locali, July 2016

In September, Cura unveiled his *Turandot* in Liège, a work he presented as stage director, set designer, and tenor. Forum Opera captures the success of the production, proclaiming Cura rediscovered ***“the ‘Turandot tone’ so unique to Puccini’s career and so difficult to define: that of an epic choral work in which China unfolds in all its magical sensuality but also its cruelty,”*** concluding that it was captivating and set a high bar for the rest of the season. Anacalse labeled it a ***“sublime production.”***

Turandot, Liège: ***The success of this ‘Turandot’ is guaranteed, of course, when Cura uses his powerful and radiant voice—and not only when he triumphs in the famous “Nessun dorma.” He is the star of the evening. The audience offered thanks for the musicality, production, and cast that towers over others.*** Opernnetz, September 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***Renaissance man José Cura was at once star tenor, director and designer of the show. Tenor Cura was in his very best form, with a secure heroic presence, and a roof raising “Nessun dorma.” This was an evening of traditional vocal values, worthy of the artist who had made a number of appearances for this company.*** Opera News, November 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***José Cura has lost little from his glorious period on discs in the late 1990s, where he played the chained Samson and Pagliaccio without flinching. The voice is always ample, fastened on physical and technical bases at all times. He must be seen on stage, his legs slightly spread, his neck tucked between his shoulders, beginning to roar like a wildcat. His timbre has a baritone coloring, along the lines of a Ramon Vinay, at the same time having the ability to go for the high notes without bleaching his voice. In conclusion, this ‘Turandot’ was a captivating show, one which opened with great fanfare the opera season at Liège. The bar has been placed very high...*** Forum Opéra, September 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***Cura confirmed his perfect mastery of the part [of Calaf].*** Il Giornale Della Musica, September 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***Dramatic tenor José Cura was both the opera's hero Calaf and stage director. [As a singer] José Cura had the humility to not put himself at the center of the production: he underplayed his role to focus on Turandot and Liù, thus emphasizing the dark and light sides of desire. Cura had the required heroic voice and had no difficulty with the high notes [with] the color of a true dramatic tenor.*** ConcertoNet, September 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***Dressed without exotic kitsch, strong singers surrounded José Cura (Calaf), a tenor of flawless strength but with heartbreaking tenderness as when he whispered "Dimmi il mio nome." The sublime production was dedicated to Cura's former singing partner, the divine Daniela Dessi.*** Anacalse, September 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***José Cura was a first-rate Calaf, with a vocal palette of warm, baritonal colors and a very natural stage presence.*** Opera On Line, October 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***Musically, the evening was at a high level. Not only does Cura prove he has a compelling approach as a director to Puccini's unfinished opera but he also excels in the demanding role of Prince Calaf. With tenoral sheen and a furious "Vincerò", he recreates the famous "Nessun dorma" and works with the conductor to rush forward so that applause does not interrupt the musical flow. This comes after Calaf's "Non piangere, Liù" in the second act in which Cura sings with moving passion and magnificent high notes. At the end there was long-lasting and frenetic applause for everyone involved. Bottom line: José Cura once again proves his versatility in Liège, and not only as a singer...*** Online Musik Magazin, September 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***Vocally, the heroic tenor embodied a committed Prince Calaf, from his crazy gamble at the end of the first act, punctuated by three great gong strokes, through his long-awaited "Nessun dorma" with its final, long held "Vincero." A masterful production.*** Crescendo, October 2016

Turandot, Liège: ***José Cura played Calaf, son of Timur. He has deservedly received many awards and it is not surprising***

that he has been Kammersänger of the Viennese Opera since 2010. As a specialist in Verdi and Puccini, he took on this role with the necessary strength, desire and love, radiating a measured dramatic effect. He voiced all the vocal qualities in a magisterial way, without exaggeration in the high notes. 'Turandot' is vocally a very difficult opera to sing because of the sometimes extremely heavy, rapidly changing vocal parts where technically the extreme is required. For Calaf, this was not a problem and José Cura may be safely counted as among the best interpreter of this role. [At the end] there was only one possible conclusion: this 'Turandot' was without a doubt a splendid accomplishment that could equal that of the Scala or the Met. Performances of this level place the Opéra Royal de Wallonie Liège on a larger international level and make us want to attend other productions of this opera house. Klassiek-Centraal, October 2016

In October, Cura traveled to Dresden to reprise his role as Mario Cavaradossi in a limited run.

Tosca, Dresden: Musically, the performance was very good and the two leads headed by José Cura offered a profound experience. A prolonged, enthusiastic ovation testified to the great satisfaction of the audience. OperaPlus, October 2016

Cura ended his operatic year with *La fanciulla del west* in Vienna, reprising his finely honed, complex bandito for an appreciative audience.

La fanciulla del west, Vienna: That Minnie melts at this Dick Johnson is easy to understand. José Cura is currently in excellent form and puts his whole passion into this love story. The security and beauty of his wonderfully timbrized voice is impressive. Der neue Merker, November 2016

La fanciulla del west, Vienna: José Cura is here—as he was three years ago—a dark-timbre Dick Johnson without any fear of the high notes while being somewhat generous in dealing with rhythm and declamation. His nonchalance makes him appear highly desirable and certainly explains the appeal of the 'intruder' in the time of the gold rush. Die Presse, November 2016

La fanciulla del west, Vienna: ***The robust tenor José Cura, working with a character not as deep as [Minnie's], manages to make Dick Johnson sympathetic... this is a rare, great stage magic.*** Der Standard, November 2016

2017

Calendar year 2017 showed the extent to which José Cura's portfolio has expanded beyond his remarkable vocalism. In January and February, Cura's celebrated production of *La Bohème* was reprised at the Royal Swedish Opera, garnering additional accolades for both the engaging staging and the insightful director; his new production of *Peter Grimes* was mounted in Bonn to rave reviews; he continued to conduct innovative programs and to showcase his own compositions; and, in a nod to his reputation as a dramatic tenor without peer, he sang his first Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, (in the original Paris version in French) and countered this great tragic figure with the equally harrowing figure of Otello.

The Monte Carlo opera production of *Tannhäuser* was a world premiere, with Cura debuting in the complex, exhausting lead role. This important opera, with its hero caught between irreconcilable worlds (the profane and the sacred, the promiscuous and the chaste, paganism and Christianity, captivity and freedom), is written with a fiendishly difficult title role, requiring a flexible tenor voice with baritone characteristics, great weight and resonance, strength in the bottom and middle, high notes as needed, dynamical variety and nuance, and all possessed by a singer who has the physical stamina to persist from beginning to end. The successful Wagner tenor is a highly prized rarity. As *Tannhäuser*, Cura offered a glimpse, with his penetrating and metallic timbre, sensitive reading, and indefatigable, charismatic presence, of what might have been had he chosen a different vocal path.

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: ***The Monte Carlo opera house had the lovely idea of reviving this rarity, an enterprise which offers a great singer who had never wanted to approach***

Wagner because he hadn't mastered the German language the occasion of his first role as a Wagner tenor: it is indeed José Cura who embodied a passionate and generous Tannhäuser, more commensurate with the sensuality of the Venusberg than with the rigor of the Wartburg. The small size of the hall permitted him a subtle and nuanced way of singing which fit the score very well. La Libre, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: For the Wagner community, this premiere had a special meaning: Monte Carlo presented 'Tannhäuser' with José Cura in the title role! To come right to the point: the result was sensational. The Argentinian, up to now at home only in the Italian and French repertoire, mastered the notoriously energy-sapping role at the highest level. Where his colleagues are happy to just "survive," Cura is in possession of the broadest imaginable palette of expressions. Cynics might claim of not having heard such a refined performance of this tenor for quite some time, but Cura approached this experience with utmost respect. In the duet with Elisabeth you marveled at his rhythmical precision in the tricky eighth note passages, pushed further forwards by the orchestra in the required "stringendo." The next tasks, tremendously difficult to master, Cura solved with his musicality. 'Tannhäuser' is about singing "Lieder." Tannhäuser sings to Venus, in hymnal verses, which Cura enhanced from recitative parlando to exalted vocal eruption. He also interrupts the "Sängerkrieg"—unctuously started by the "Landgraf—almost improvisatorially, spontaneously, to work himself up into a rage of passion. In the big ensemble, the sticking point of each interpretation of Tannhäuser, Cura knows how to change the otherwise murderous "Erbarm Dich mein" calls into elegant vocal phrases using the French style of "voix mixte" and remains audible even against the strong competition from the ensemble and the chorus. The mixture of eloquent narrating and extrovert-self-forgetful expression culminates in a "Rome narrative" which increases the tension to unbearable levels. The international board of opera house directors should now get together in order to finance a comprehensive German language course for José Cura. There are not many singers of Tannhäuser of this quality running around between the

Bayreuth Festspielhaus and Teatro Colon. Die Presse, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *From the opening, we can see our hero languishing in a sort of luxurious house of tolerance, his brain indoctrinated, trying to rebuild his moral and physical virginity. Tortured by both (rarely smiling, José Cura makes an effort and it works), our former erotic sets off in the pursuit of eternal salvation. Undertaking the role (for the first time) José Cura's Roman narrative, full of despair, was extremely effective.* Podcast Journal, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *It was precisely the use of French that allowed José Cura to take on the role: as the Argentinian tenor has told us, he would probably never have agreed to perform Wagner if he had not had this opportunity to interpret this music in a language he has mastered. One can always reproach him on a few errors of pronunciation here and there but this great artist understands what he sings and knows how to express it.* Opera Forum, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *José Cura as Tannhäuser has the ability to be dramatically invested in the different stages of the role. Although the top of his register is marked by a vibrato, his account of Rome is very theatrical and very powerful.* Bachtrack, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *The title role was here entrusted to the Argentinian tenor José Cura, a versatile artist (singer, conductor, and director) who has proven his worth in bel canto, Verdi, and Puccini (in Monaco he sang the title role in 'Stiffelio' in 2013). Although Cura did not immediately seem convincing in this role, it is he who, through his theatrical presence, gives this production its particularly "human" character. In Acts II and III he is perfectly in his element. A passionate knight and brilliant minstrel, Cura's Tannhäuser seems more moved than blasé about the admiration and the constant friendship of his fellow knights and by the love Elizabeth still bears him, even after he deserted her for the Venusberg. Cura happens to be interested in the plight of his character who constantly falls from his pedestal because he*

cannot control his impulses. In his narrative of the pilgrimage to Rome in Act III he shines as much with the liquidity of the timbre of his voice as he does by his technical ability [ease]. He even manages to insert a note of humor in this so-serious scene: before facing his executioners, he invites his friend Wolfram to leave and taste the pleasures of the Venusberg, a suggestion followed by Wolfram—though needless to say that such a stage direction does not appear in the libretto. The gesture, however, gives lightness to the characters and frees the opera from its dualism between sex and asceticism. The effect of this 'Tannhäuser' is singular, not only because of its Gallic sounds, but also because this production ignores the contemplative heaviness of certain productions in favor of the more narrative, Latin, and fully human aspects of the plot. These qualities also bring this opera closer to us. ClassicAgenda, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: And what about him? Tannhäuser—here called Henri? José Cura had a bad cold and during the ballet he coughed several times: we feared the worst. Nothing bad happened. With Tannhäuser Cura has conquered yet another role brilliantly. Perhaps due to the cold he remained more subdued during the core scenes but sang powerfully especially during the harp and horn sections, and offered a Rome narrative with so many nuances that I struggled with tears. Distinguished, with a lot of soft tones and also visually touching performance, Cura was the romantic hero par excellence, a handsome man and an absolute professional, with serious French. Hats off! This was a memorable evening, a special kind of experience. Opera Lounge, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: The musical performance can be spoken of as at the highest level. With José Cura, one has the ideal title hero, convincing in his debut in a Wagner opera. He sang every note and he sang brilliantly. Wagner always demanded 'Italianità' from his singers and that he got from a highly impressive Cura with a flexible voice that was never strained in the high notes. Together with his acting made for an ideal Tannhäuser! This was an artistically important project... WeltExpress, March 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *José Cura's interpretation will be hard to match. He added no histrionic effects in the song of exemplary purity, culminating in a narrative of the pilgrimage to Rome whispered in mezza voce thanks to a remarkable mastery of a mixed voice that is never détimbrée. Naturally, this did not prevent him from shining in the splendor of the score, but one feels that the Argentinian tenor sought above all to reveal the humanity and vulnerability of Tannhäuser who here became the exact antithesis of the more virulent, even unpleasant one, once admirably embodied by Wolfgang Windgassen.* ConcertoNet, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *José Cura, with his very endearing timbre, carries the team forward with his fearlessness.* ResMusica, March 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *In the title role, José Cura maintained resilient voice throughout, despite the vocal demands rising from the Rome Narration.* Beckmesser's Quill, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *José Cura collected a variety of opinions for his Tannhäuser. Certainly, the amount of 'Latinity' in the role may be troublesome for those comparing the performance with certain singers in the German style. For our part, we liked the interpretation of this charismatic artist, also a good musician, since he has conducted renowned orchestras, and it didn't bother us to find him in the feverish outbreaks of an Otello or the peremptory accents of a Samson. Moreover, Cura knows how to control the bursts of enthusiasm or revolt when necessary by using a whisper or mezza-voce when his Tannhäuser becomes fragile or skeptical. His account of his return from Rome in the last act is undeniably moving.* MetaMag, March 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *The Argentinian tenor José Cura is impressive in the title role: his true tenor pleasantly changes the timbre from all those high-pitched baritones who struggle without hope of success against a merciless range. Despite the material and self-importance in the voice, he also manages to showcase the character's fragility.* Opera Online, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *After the version (French) and the conductor (Stutzmann), the third surprise of the performance was José Cura (a tenor who also conducts) as Tannhäuser, his first Wagner. In Monte Carlo he was in good form, with vocal mannerisms controlled and his instrument still sounding bronzed. As usual, he held the highest notes for the minimum necessary. With a French elocution that was clear enough, Cura stressed a more tormented Henri (whose name is not mentioned in the opera 'Tannhäuser'), his bursts of passion and attacks of remorse, in addition to his charismatic stage presence. The Rome narrative, translated with a wide variety of colors and shades, with the highlight of an interpretation as unexpected as it was remarkable. The resurrection of the Parisian 'Tannhäuser' was a success.* El Cronista Errant, March 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *It is not certain that Tannhäuser has become the new favorite role of José Cura, but one feels that this incursion into the Wagnerian repertoire mattered to him. His French is not always comprehensible, but the language of Don José and Samson is not hostile to him. The voice, after a career spanning twenty-five years, is still there, wide, powerful enough, expressive and resistant, while the high notes still sound robust. His instinctive and impulsive temperament is appropriate to the anti-hero Tannhäuser, since the Roman narrative shows no apparent effort, sung without force, in a very personal way. A resurrection which deserved discovery.* ConcertClassic, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *The Tannhäuser of José Cura was filled with nuances and the vocals and theatrics were elegant. His voice sounded ripe and the emission seemed easy. [...] Rossini wrote: "Wagner has wonderful moments and terrible quarters of an hour." That was not the case on the evening at the Monte Carlo Opera.* OperaClick, March 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: *This new production by l'Opéra de Monte Carlo offered reasons to make the journey: it is the first time that José Cura, a subscriber to Verdi or Bizet, has ventured onto Wagnerian soil. In the title role, Cura possessed stamina and power. While his line could sometimes be a*

bit neater, the color, both dark and Latin, is marvelous, with an art of extrovert personification which culminated in a Rome narrative told in tortured confidences. The tenor is able to flatter himself, in spite a hint of an accent, with a very correct diction. Diapason, March 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: ***In the lead role, José Cura [offered] a heroic voice. The whole of France deserves to see this show with Cura...*** Monaco Matin, February 2017

Tannhäuser, Monte Carlo: ***[One of the] surprises of the evening was José Cura taking on a major Wagnerian role. It was a rare treat to hear Tannhäuser without any strained heldentenor posturing; Cura produced a tireless flow of powerful Latin tone, with phrasing that worked better in French than it would have in German, and he was a rugged, vulnerable stage presences.*** Opera News, May 2017

Cura had long expressed his desire to sing the title role in *Peter Grimes*, the dark, ambiguous masterpiece from Benjamin Britten that pits an individual against the masses. In 2017 Cura was not only able to sing the role but to stitch together his own vision of the work, designing the set and directing the production. The result was a transformative vision of the stranger among us, the individual who is unable to fit into convention and is therefore forever lost.

Peter Grimes, Bonn: ***Vocally, Cura presented himself in top condition, his warm tenor responded easily in all pitches. But above all it is the many nuances he sets and with which he intensifies the inner conflict of Grimes that fascinated. The performance was a plea for the ensemble theater and that only together can one create great moments of opera. This in turn can only succeed if there is somebody who can bring together everybody and if there is a coherent overall concept. José Cura provides all this in Bonn, and he also offered a touching and vocally terrific role portrayal. No wonder the complete auditorium stood up for standing ovations when the tenor came on stage for the final applause.*** Das Opernglas, May 2017

Peter Grimes, Bonn: *The first thing to note about Cura's performance was that he looked the part. He was dressed as a typical looking fisherman, physically strong, well-built, slightly weather-beaten and sporting the requisite seafarer's beard. His acting was secure and expressive, and his strong presence allowed him to dominate the stage. Musically, Cura produced some magical moments, the most compelling being Grimes' Act 3, scene 2 mad scene, accompanied by an off-stage chorus. Distance fog horns introduce the scene and Grimes, slowly descending into a state of delirium, recalls past events. Cura's vocal control was as near perfect as it was expressive. His mood swinging wildly and singing in snatches, Cura moderated the tone, coloring, and dynamics of his voice, successfully capturing Grimes' mental agonies. It was a truly energetic and convincing reading of the part. A further example of Cura's qualities was Grimes' monologue 'Go there!' followed on by an extended arioso 'I'll tear the collar of your neck' in which he addresses his apprentice and himself, reflecting upon his recent troubles and hopes, whilst also berating the boy. At times threatening, at times contemplative, Cura produced another versatile and expressive reading, his voice characterizing the ebb and flow of his unstable mental state.* OperaWire, May 2017

Peter Grimes, Bonn: *Co-produced with the Opera de Monte Carlo, Britten's 'Peter Grimes' is the first offering of the opera season in Bonn in a new staging by tenor José Cura who also took responsible for the title role. The whole presentation was high quality with the musical performance at a very good level. Cura sang the fisherman's part with a voice that was present throughout the range. He also has an excellent technique for singing piano without overly dramatizing emotion during the several dark scenes, especially the last one.* ResMusica, July 2017

Peter Grimes, Bonn: *José Cura has a full, sonorous, brilliant voice in forte, a pleasant baritonal undercoat and always beautiful sound. He has an imposing stage appearance, powerful and present. A formidable Grimes, no question. And Cura seems incredibly sympathetic. His Grimes has a beautiful dream of a happy life, which is not granted him. For the*

premiere audience it was enough: standing ovation. Online Music Magazine, May 2017

Peter Grimes, Bonn: ***That the role of Peter Grimes has long been a dream for Cura can be understood after this evening. He acts as an elemental force in which voice and presentation form a gripping unity. Both in the most lyrical moments as in the aria "Now the Great Bear and Pleiades" and in the madness scene in the third act he makes the entire soul torment of Peter Grimes both audible and noticeable with his Otello-shaped voice. The premiere audience celebrated with great enthusiasm and standing ovations.*** General-Anzeiger, March 2017

After his indelible success in Bonn with his production of *Peter Grimes*, Cura returned to Liège for his timeless *Otello*, leading to ecstatic applause.

Otello, Liège: ***Committed body and soul, capable of facing bravely this role feared by all tenors, José Cura creates a large-scale Otello with a strong force of conviction. The singing does not reach a high level of refinement but the timbre displays a beautiful consistency while the voice, very strong, is powerfully projected.*** ConcertoNet, June 2017

Otello, Liège: ***From the moment Otello bursts onto the scene, he captures it and becomes the undisputed winner. José Cura returns to assume the role of Verdi's 'Otello' with the maturity of middle age, giving an intense and painful interpretation, one which he is able to alternate easily between power of expression and delicate inner turmoil.*** GDM, June 2017

Otello, Liège: ***And so on to the singers. Most persuasive of all was the star tenor, José Cura, in the title role. The Argentinian showed he is still at home in the royal class of tenors more than 20 years after his debut. If his "Esultate" seemed a bit forced, he improved from scene to scene, vocally and theatrically convincing as the insanely jealous husband and broken man who is Otello at the end. He was strongest when he relied not only on mere power but when transporting gentle, deep feelings across the orchestra pit, producing, for***

example, goose bumps in the final scene. The audience was very enthusiastic about the singer's performances. Der Opern Freund, June 2017

Otello, Liège: *The Argentinian tenor José Cura explores his part with burning vigor and a profusion of colors. His "Ab-basso le spade!" in which he proclaims his authority contrasts completely with his duet with Desdemona which closes the first act. He perfectly disseminates his perception of the volatility of happiness when he says he wants to die in the ecstasy of his partner's embrace. His "Già nella notte densa" overflows with tenderness. Would the gods be jealous of this pure happiness?* Senior Magazine, June 2017

Otello, Liège: *After a somewhat wayward start (a few lags between stage and pit), the first act went well with a correct love duet. [Act II offered a] final duet that electrified the room. The third act saw the triumph of José Cura's Otello, a real beast on stage. His furious dialogues with Iago and then the famous monolog "Dio! Mi potevi scagliar" were offered by a great dramatic artist. In the fourth act, wounded, bruised like a wild beast, Cura delivered a moving "Niun mi tema."* Crescendo, June 2017

Otello, Liège: *It was not for the staging that we made the trip but for the title role, here embodied by the famous Argentinian tenor José Cura. We cannot forget, as the curtain came down, the exemplary nuances of the whispered death. And with the exception of a curiously negotiated "Exultate!" Cura displayed the vocal form that has not been heard from him since the time of early splendor (i.e., in the early 2000s when we heard him in the same part in Barcelona's Liceu), and thus he remains one of the most idiomatic interpreters of the role today—and to speak frankly, and immense Otello.* Opera Online, June 2017

Otello, Liège: *With all the recent excited anticipation of the role debut of a certain German tenor in London, it was still a revelation to hear once again José Cura in this most demanding of Verdi roles, which he has been singing for twenty years. He is a singer who has never been content to rely on a safe number of familiar parts, and this year alone he has*

sung Tannhäuser in French, and produced, designed and taken the lead in 'Peter Grimes.' The psychological and vocal demand of the latter came to mind when he sang "Già la pleiade ardente in mar discende." In Shakespeare's original, Othello says "for that I am declined into the vale of years," and Cura, with his leonine mane of grey hair and grizzled beard, looked every inch the mature military leader, commanding of stature and profile. Cura's powerful spinto tenor immediately impressed with his opening "Esultate!" and left no doubt as to his authority in his masterful delivery of "Abbasso le spade!" in his quelling of the drunken Act 1 riot. With his years of experience, less becomes more. The waywardness of pitch and rhythm of earlier days are gone, and his sable dark resonant lower voice brought both exotic otherness and passion to the love duet. As Iago's poison took hold, Cura's imperious dignity and self-possession crumbled with lightning flashes of rage in his eyes. Encompassing dynamic vocal extremes, his subtle inwardness from "Ora e per sempre addio" and a grave sotto voce, almost muffled "Dio! mi potevi scagliar" through to a nobly pathetic "Niun mi tema" this was the tragic fall of a flawed hero on a Shakespearean scale. The compelling strengths of Cura made for a moving evening, more so than the recent stellar event in London. Bachtrack, June 2017

Cura closed out the year as Andrea Chénier at the Teatro Colón in a traditional production elevated by the passion and persuasion of the star, who received ovations from the audience and raves from the critics.

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *The Teatro Colón ended this opera season with Andrea Chénier and a great performance by José Cura. This staging allowed the protagonists to find their highest tension point at the end of performance, creating a climate both passionate and frightening as the lovers were led to the guillotine. Cura had a wonderful night, precise in the middle voice and powerful in the high-note area. The singer from Rosario showed off his particular color of voice, which at this stage of his career is a true registered trademark listed on the stock exchange. A very good show.* MundoClasico, December 2017

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *José Cura has a strong stage presence. Cura is a very good tenor, with a great handling of his vocal resources, with a solid stage presence and a tendency to grandiloquence. Perhaps by the sum of these qualities, he captured and seduced both the audience and Maddalena in how he sang "Un di all'azzurro spazio."* La Nación, December 2017

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *The opera asks for good voices, and here it is, starting with José Cura in the leading role. Cura is intense and epic, even in some love duets, and he is definitely not a precious singer but his line is always firm and convincing and his personality radiates extraordinary strength. After the enthusiastic applause, the entire audience intoned Happy Birthday; José Cura turned 55 that same Tuesday, thanking the gesture with his hands to his heart and visibly moved.* Clarin, December 2017

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *On the night of the premiere, tenor José Cura performed André Chénier, vocally and theatrically —an absolute triumph.* Forum Opéra, December 2017

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *The legendary Teatro Colón saved its production of 'Andrea Chénier' with ingenuity, old-fashioned craftsmanship and by enlisting Argentinian tenor José Cura, the international star who has also worked as stage director and conductor in Buenos Aires. Cura's upper notes rang full and silvery, and his acting improved as the guillotine moment approached.* Opera News, March 2018

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *The fantastic and dramatic final duet, in which the lovers go to the guillotine, marks the synthesis of this excellent version offered by José Cura and María Pía Piscitelli in the leading roles. From the beginning, with "Un di all'azzurro spazio," Cura showed his vocal power and his precise embodiment of the character of the poet without diminishment at any time. The audience celebrated with loud applause.* MW, December 2017

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: *The production of 'Andrea Chénier' showed us a very clever José Cura, great actor who*

managed his vocal resources with total wisdom culminating in a resounding fourth act. Criticos Musicales de la Argentina, December 2017

Andrea Chénier, Buenos Aires: ***The tenor José Cura put all his experience at the service of the character, using his vocal resources with intelligence. Thus, his "Improvviso" maintained its lyrical essence and beauty in the expression, as did his aria "Come un bel dí di Maggio." As an actor, he showed emotion and conviction and his performance was highly celebrated by the audience.*** Criticos Musicales de la Argentina, December 2017

Cura also received the title of 'Honorary Professor' from the National University of Rosario in November; following the award ceremony he presented a talk entitled "Be yourself: intellectual honesty may not pay in the short term, but will leave its mark in history" for students and the interested public.

2018

Cura brought his *Peter Grimes* from Bonn to Monte Carlo at the beginning of 2018; his psychologically intense and timely production focusing on the deadly effects of alienation and isolation was critically acclaimed, as was the tenor who held the show together with his insightful characterization and liquid voice.

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: José Cura designed, in co-production with the Opera of Bonn, this 'Peter Grimes.' The artist assumed a protean role, singing the title role, directing, setting the staging and designing the costumes. He created a satisfying production because he understood the scope of the complex psychology inherent the role. Of an unusual physical strength, with a voice almost too beautiful for the role, caught between vulnerability and contradictions, we could imagine [Cura's] Grimes wreaking havoc in an English port bar...an image rejected by the Argentinian to create ambiguity [and present] a man who had suffered. With an imagination rich enough to inspire the desire to live in bet-

ter conditions yet constantly facing frustrations, José Cura's Grimes marvelously expresses the torments that tear at this solitary fisherman, favoring the figure of the hopeless, the enlightened poet (it is necessary to hear his hallucination in the song in the tavern) and the surly but touched lover. Neither hero nor villain but doubtless subtlety disruptive. Podcast Journal, February 2018

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: *What to say about José Cura? Audience members commented that they were incredibly stunned by the new performance of the Argentinian already basking in the glow of his previous appearances on the Monegasque stage: the now legendary Stiffelio in April 2013 and more recently but equally astonishing Tannhäuser. When the talent of an operatic artist is able to arouse genuine emotion, his repertoire can leave Giuseppe Verdi and elegantly rub shoulders with Richard Wagner and then venture with unparalleled charm into contemporary theater. From his impressive "Alone, Alone, Alone with the Dead Child" signifying his initial despair to his final "Here you are, nearly home" through his daydreaming "In dreams, I built myself some kindlier home" in the presence of his apprentice, José Cura impresses us by the irreproachable accuracy of his tone and forces admiration by the successful vocal and dramatic expression of this inner chaos, of this incapacitating psychological surge that finds its anchor only in death.* Musicologie, February 2018

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: *The Monte Carlo Opera presented a 'Peter Grimes' whose insistent and oppressive intensity is perfectly rendered. José Cura offers an interpretation that embodied Peter Grimes. His imposing and fluid voice is torn in the high-pitched notes when he approaches them from his chest voice, which reinforces the theatrical characterization of the character's pain. Conversely, high notes emitted in mixed voice are strong even though they may seem more fragile, especially in the "Now the Great Bear and Pleiades" where the delicate beauty of the vocal line is paramount. On the other hand, his voice rushes into the air during the drinking scene that follows, like a flash of lightning.* Ôlyrix, February 2018

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: *Previously appearing in the opera house last year in 'Tannhäuser,' the Argentinian tenor embodies a Peter Grimes trapped in his internal prison. With his massive body folded in on itself, his clumsy and brutal gestures, Cura's Grimes is a ball of nerves ready to explode at any moment, evincing a physical impossibility to exist, to live. He must be heard singing a capella, his eyes fixed and misted, suddenly fragile and ready to die. What's more, Cura displayed dazzling vocal health, be it in the middle or high register, modulating his instrument with ease, alternating sumptuous piannissimi with heroic power with a naturalness that commands admiration. This new role is a good one to add to Cura's incredible list of achievements.* Opera Online, February 2018

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: *In the title role, [Cura] defies any putative stylistic archetype, perhaps because of the non-concealable Latin characteristics of his vocality in which an emotionally physical engagement emerges. His sincerity in the role exposes the ambivalence of this marginal man, brutal and skin-deep, rejected by the community, without yielding to some simplistic aggressive male pride. José Cura undoubtedly constitutes the pivot around which the drama is articulated.* Anaclese, February 2018

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: *José Cura completely inhabited this complex character, violent and full of flaws, and his interpretation is one that remains with you [long after the opera is done]. He also directed, created the set, designed the costumes and determined the beautiful lighting. More than ever, opera seems to be a total art.* Fragil, March 2018

Peter Grimes, Monte Carlo: *Cura did not ignore the acting part, and thus the Argentinian artist could demonstrate his dramatic abilities. The role demanded it and the interpreter showed it. José Cura played the character of the cursed fisherman with verismo conviction; his Anglo-Saxon expression was clear as was his emission. This created a contrast, a conflict—peccata minuta—with the black personality of the suffering character, but leaving that contradiction aside, the interpretation of the tenor was sure, expressive, cohe-*

rent with the text and, of course, audible, without doubts or failures. OperaActual, February 2018

Cura joined forces with the Rome Opera to bring *Pagliacci* to Muscat, Oman, for a special two-night presentation—an exciting step toward introducing classical opera to a new audience.

Pagliacci, Muscat: Enthusiastic applause from an international audience from all the Gulf countries welcomed the first performance of Ruggero Leoncavallo's 'Pagliacci' that the ensembles of the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma brought to the Royal Opera House in Muscat, Oman. The success was due to the very effective union between the direction of Franco Zeffirelli and a musical contribution of great quality. The cast was very important, led by an extraordinary José Cura, who had a personal triumph for Canio's passionate interpretation. AgenziaNova, March 2018

Pagliacci, Muscat: Canio the troupe manager, performed by the 55-year-old Argentinian tenor, Jose Cura, announced his show. Cura has played Canio hundreds of times in 30 different productions, including his own 2007 re-imagining, "La Commedia e Finita." His performance in Muscat reflected his distinctive bold and bright tenor qualities, with hints of dark baritone that have led him to international fame. He sang a compelling 'Vesti La Guibba.' Oman Observer, March 2018

In May, Cura joined his long-time colleague in St Petersburg as the city celebrated Olga Borodina's 30 years of artistic excellence with a semi-staged production of *Samson et Dalila*.

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