

“Heads Up” Re Bouquet Toss Today

Harvard Club – Box 126
27 West 44th Street
New York, NY 10036
February 7, 2009

Diva Anna Netrebko
c/o The Metropolitan Opera
Lincoln Center
New York, NY 10023

Dear Diva Netrebko:

What a treat it will be to see/hear your Lucia again this afternoon!!!

Attached is your traditional magnum of Dom Perignon with which to celebrate your triumph and to provide something to which to attach a “heads up” to expect, for the sake of safety, a bouquet toss at the closing curtain.

There will probably be an immediate “open curtain” curtain call featuring solely you. But since I will be seated immediately behind the conductor, I might not be able to toss for you at that time because he will probably still be shaking hands with the concert master and, quite likely, still be in the way.

And I do not know whether there will be “open curtain” or “closed curtain” curtain calls for the entire cast. If there is an “open curtain” I will toss as soon as you appear from the rear or side of the stage, so the bouquet should land long before your arrival at the front of the stage.

And if there is a “closed curtain” then I will toss after you have finished your first bow – and I will aim for the opening between the left & right curtain right behind the prompter’s box, so if you have come out half way onto the right side of the stage, there should be a safe margin. (If you don’t come out very far, then I will aim further to the left to provide the safe margin.)

Good luck with your performance!!!

Your Adoring Fan,

John S. Karls

PS – I am very sorry the DP is not the traditional magnum with accompanying note announcing a list of performances at which to expect bouquet tosses. However, you may recall that in 2005 I “retired” from tossing bouquets after more decades than I would like to admit. And am reluctantly resuming tossing for the HD-theatercasts of 5-6 of my long-time Divas so that one of the finest operatic traditions (The Diva’s volunteer claque) does not become extinct.

Two Amusing Stories for Tomorrow

The Austrian Prime Minister Was One of Your Biggest Fans!!!

You have probably long since met the Prime Minister of Austria. Particularly since you seem to spend so much time in Vienna and Salzburg.

And you probably don't remember your first bouquet tosses from me. My recollection is that friends provided a "heads up" 10 years ago that it was necessary to come to Florence to see/hear the opera world's newest Diva!!! And I don't recall whether my first bouquets for you were in Florence or during your first summer in Salzburg.

However, so you would feel welcome for your first Salzburg summer, I was trying to drop in for as many of your performances as possible to toss bouquets starting with your premiere.

The bouquet at one performance nicked the railing at the head of the aisle as it was being launched and you might have noticed that when it landed on stage, some of the petals were missing.

Christian Büttner (an old friend who had moved back to Vienna to run one of the largest Austrian banks) rushed over to say hello. But as we started to chat, I noticed that a very distinguished-looking gentleman was on his hands and knees gathering up the rose petals from the floor at the head of the aisle. Thinking he might be a staff member whose job it was to pick up the petals, I apologized for creating the mess.

Christian did a "classic double take" and, snapping to attention, said: "Mr. Prime Minister, may I introduce my friend, John Karls"!!! The Prime Minister, who was quite a musician in his own right (a violinist, if memory serves), said that in his opinion, bouquet tosses are one of the grandest traditions in opera, they are important for the singers, and he was on his hands and knees because, **as one of your biggest fans**, he wanted to collect as many of the petals as possible for his Anna Netrebko scrap book!!!

Why You Didn't Receive a Bouquet Toss for Your Puritani Theater-cast

Your Puritani theater-cast, if memory serves, was probably the first theater-cast and occurred not long after my May 2005 "retirement" from tossing bouquets.

However, so that one of the finest opera traditions (The Diva's volunteer claque) did not become extinct, I began encouraging friends and acquaintances to toss their own bouquets – even offering to act as a consultant, a coach and, if necessary, a last-second substitute.

The closest any of my friends ever came to tossing was for your Puritani theater-cast.

If the Austrian Prime Minister is not your biggest fan, then my friend Tim was!!! (Though I would like to think that I am one of your biggest fans also!!!) And Tim had adored Puritani since childhood!!! So we saw your premiere together!!! And although I had left the following day for my ski house at Kitzbühel, I sent Tim several e-mails encouraging him to toss for your Puritani theater-cast.

After sweetening the normal offer of consultant/coach/substitute to include buying and preparing the bouquet myself, Tim agreed and I flew right back to NYC. I had been unable to get a first-row ticket for Tim but had found a first-row friend who was willing to switch with Tim for the last act so that we could make the toss.

I believe that I even sent you your traditional bottle of Dom Perignon to provide a "heads up" to expect a bouquet toss and to explain that it would be tossed by Tim, one of your biggest fans!!!

Tim and "my bouquet" that I had purchased and prepared – failed to appear at the end of the last intermission!!!

Unbeknownst to me, Tim had brought his girl friend to the performance. And he had been so overwhelmed by the beauty of your singing that he proposed marriage to his girl friend!!! And gave her "my bouquet"!!! Which should have been tossed to you!!!