

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER
January 4, 2001 9-10:30 PM on PBS
Renée Fleming @ The Penthouse
Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

On Thursday evening, January 4, Live From Lincoln Center will present an unusual and informal visit with the American soprano who currently reigns supreme on the stages of the world's opera houses, Renée Fleming. Just two months ago she graced the Live From Lincoln Center program series in a dual appearance with Russian baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky. This time around we'll find her on stage in the Kaplan Penthouse high atop the Rose Building in New York City's Lincoln Center.

Almost exactly a year ago we presented "Itzhak Perlman at The Penthouse" in what proved to be a successful and popular venture, enlivened by Perlman's own commentary and reminiscences. The same format will be followed again, as Renée Fleming sings and talks about music which is particularly close to her heart. This will embrace operatic fare, of course, but also art songs, jazz, folk songs, and some Broadway show material.

Renée Fleming, a graduate of the Juilliard School (one of the constituents of Lincoln Center), rocketed to prominence when she was chosen by Sir Georg Solti for his recording of Mozart's *Così fan Tutte*. She has subsequently made a specialty of many of the Mozart soprano roles. Just a week before this broadcast she will be seen on PBS in the Metropolitan Opera's production of "Don Giovanni." But Mozart is just one of the many Fleming specialties-as "Renée Fleming @ The Penthouse" will amply illustrate.

Her musical associates will be pianist Steven Blier and the famed Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

To get things started on a humorous note, Miss Fleming will sing "Another New Voice Teacher" by the American composer, Andrew Thomas. An ambitious vocal student hopes that her new voice teacher will be the one to get her career really rolling. Why? Because the new teacher knows someone who knows someone who knows someone who knows....James Levine! Then we'll have a short *La Bohème* potpourri, ending with Mimi's introduction of herself to Rodolfo, "Si, mi chiamano Mimi." Other operatic items will include the treacherously difficult "Come scoglio" from *Così fan Tutte* and the Recitative and Gavotte from Massenet's *Manon*.

Another composer whose music is a particular enthusiasm of Renée Fleming's is Richard Strauss. Her appearances in *Der Rosenkavalier* and as soloist in the composer's "Four Last Songs" have established her as the ideal singer for Strauss's radiant and soaring writing for the soprano voice. In the Penthouse we'll

hear her sing one of Strauss's most passionate songs, Cécilie, written on the eve of Strauss's marriage to---yes, a soprano!

We in the United States know Sergei Rachmaninoff principally as a remarkable pianist and as the composer of some of the most beloved music for piano. Rachmaninoff also composed many songs, and many among them are achingly beautiful. On our Live From Lincoln Center telecast last November Renée Fleming, in a searing performance of the "Letter Scene" from Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin, exhibited a remarkable insight into the very heart of the Russian musical soul. In her upcoming Live From Lincoln Center appearance she has chosen one of the finest of all Rachmaninoff's songs, translated for this occasion as "Oh, Do Not Sing"; in my youth the more usual translation was "Oh Cease Thy Singing, Maiden Fair." The prominent violin obbligato created for celebrated violinist Frits Kreistler will be played by one of the members of the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble, Todd Philipps.

Two of Manuel de Falla's Seven Popular Spanish Songs-"Cancion" and "Nana"-will also figure on the program, as will the haunting Aria from the Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 by Brazil's Villa-Lobos, all of them in special versions by composer and arranger Dave Grusin. An unusual item is a song by John Kander, half of the Broadway team Kander and Ebb, which has given us, among other treasures, "Cabaret." "A Letter From Sullivan Ballou" is its title and its text is by a Union Civil War soldier written the night before he enters battle. The words are a tender expression of love for his family, his patriotism and his idealism. On a different note is a song by conductor-composer Michael Tilson Thomas: "Fame" is a setting of Emily Dickinson's scathing poem.

These are only some of the joys that await us on Thursday evening, January 4, in this 90-minute visit with "Renée Fleming @ The Penthouse." As always, I advise you to check your local PBS station as to the exact time and date of the telecast in your area. See you then!