

***LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER***  
**December 31, 2005, 8:00 p.m. on PBS**  
**New York Philharmonic**  
***New Year's Eve Gala***

First some statistics. Live From Lincoln Center took to the airwaves on January 30, 1976 with a concert by the New York Philharmonic and Van Cliburn as soloist. Since then the Philharmonic has appeared on Live From Lincoln Center more than 60 times, playing under an array of conductors including Andre Previn, Pierre Boulez, Rafael Kubelik, Sir Colin Davis, Leonard Bernstein, Erich Leinsdorf, Zubin Mehta, David Zinman, Kurt Masur, Sir Andrew Davis, Lorin Maazel - and Danny Kaye! - among others.

Many season-opening concerts figured in that sequence, along with no fewer than seven New Year's Eve Galas. Thus it is particularly appropriate that our next Live From Lincoln Center presentation, on Saturday evening, December 31, will be this year's New York Philharmonic New Year's Eve Gala, rounding out 30 seasons of Live From Lincoln Center on PBS.

The Vienna Philharmonic, back in the 1930s, established a New Year's tradition of music by the Johann Strauss family, a tradition that has been emulated by other orchestras throughout the world. Indeed, the New York Philharmonic has taken that path several times. But there have been other years when the Orchestra's New Year's Eve concerts have presented a kaleidoscopic variety of frothy entertainment, including the memorable all-Gershwin program presented three years ago by the Philharmonic's Music Director, Lorin Maazel. And this year, too, Maestro Maazel has something different up his sleeve: a program of Italian opera favorites by Rossini, Catalani, Cilea, Mascagni, Verdi, Ponchielli and Puccini, with soprano Angela Gheorghiu as soloist.

In little more than a decade Angela Gheorghiu has emerged on the international scene as one of the most sought-after artists of our time. Born in Romania, she seems to have been born to sing. "I can't remember the exact time in my life (when I began to sing)," she has said, "because I always sang! I was so little I can't remember. I sang all types of music, but mostly operatic." When she was thirteen she went to study at the Bucharest Music Academy. Her graduation coincided with the fall of the government of the dictator Ceausescu, and after her 1990 debut as Mimi in Puccini's "La Boheme" her name quickly became known outside of her homeland. Her international career may be said to have begun with her 1992 debut at London's Covent Garden as Zerlina in Mozart's "Don Giovanni." Mimi was the vehicle of her 1992 Metropolitan Opera debut.

Two years later she auditioned for the role of Violetta in Verdi's "La Traviata" for the eminent conductor, Sir Georg Solti. When he heard her, he was moved to tears. "I had to go out," he said. "The girl is wonderful. She can do anything." A

further element was added to her life, both personal and professional, when she married the tenor, Roberto Alagna, in 1996. Together the two of them have graced the operatic stages of the world as the romantic lovers in such works as Massenet's "Werther" and "Manon."

On our Live From Lincoln Center program Angela Gheorghiu will sing some of the best-known arias from the Italian repertoire, including "Pace, pace, mio Dio" from Verdi's "La forza del Destino"; and several Puccini arias, including "Un bel di" from "Madama Butterfly".

Gheorghiu begins her part of the program with two ravishing arias from two otherwise rarely-performed works: "Ebben? Ne andro lontana" from Catalani's "La Wally" and "Io son l'umile ancella" from Cilea's "Adriana Lecouvreur." Both are heartfelt expressions by the respective title characters: Wally's an anguished leave-taking; Adriana's a statement of fidelity to the creator of art.

For their part, Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic will begin the concert with the Overture to Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra," its opening drum rolls a perfect herald of the exciting evening to follow. And as the evening progresses, the Philharmonic will also be heard in these orchestral excerpts from operas: the Intermezzo from Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana"; the Ballabile from Verdi's "Otello"; the Dance of the Hours from Ponchielli's "La Gioconda"; and in conclusion the Overture to Rossini's "William Tell".

So there it is: an evening of Italian opera, soprano Angela Gheorghiu with Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic on New Year's Eve, 2005.

As usual I suggest you check the listing of your local PBS station for the exact day and time of broadcast in your area.

Happy New Year everyone!