



## Media release

14 May 2010

### **Renee Fleming and award-winning director Mary Zimmerman team up in Rossini's *Armida***

The nouvelle grande dame of opera, Renee Fleming takes on the wicked, yet enchanting title role in the Metropolitan Opera's new production of Gioacchino Rossini's *Armida*, which opens at all Cinema Nouveau theatres on May 28, 2010.

Singing *Armida* for the first time on the Metropolitan Opera stage, Fleming says:

"One of the greatest joys of performing is inhabiting a character who lies in total opposition to who I am. A man-destroying sorceress has captured the creative imagination of many writers and composers, not to mention interpreters."

In this new production, Fleming takes direction from Tony Award-winning director Mary Zimmerman who had this to say about discovering the opera, "It's like coming across a buried treasure under the sea, a box of jewels."

On the imaginative direction Zimmerman has taken with this contemporary interpretation of the opera, she goes on to say, "We're trying to use simple methods of old-time theater in the way the opera instructs you to. All the theatrical enchantment that the libretto and score call for—the power of change and transformation—is a mirror of the sorceress's power."

To imagine the sublime realm of Rossini's mythical tale, Zimmerman teams up with the set and costume designer Richard Hudson, who created the sets for Julie Taymor's production of *The Lion King*.

Hudson has created a vivid and fantastical world of red poppies, giant spiders, brightly colored parrots, and other dazzling visual elements. The work of lighting designer Brian MacDevitt and choreographers Graciela Daniele and Daniel Pelzig helps ensure that the magical images let the opera's dramatic and musical riches take center stage.

On stage with Fleming is an army of Christian soldiers, which features no fewer than six tenors who fall under her spell.

Tenor Lawrence Brownlee sings Rinaldo, *Armida*'s lover and victim and Riccardo Frizza conducts.

Set in the time of the crusades and inspired by the 16th-century epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* (“Jerusalem Delivered”) by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso, *Armida* tells the story of a seductive sorceress who lures Christian soldiers to her island prison.

In addition to the screening of this phenomenal mythical opera, Cinema Nouveau will host Opera Nights, a pilot project that is designed to educate cinema audiences about the long-standing tradition of opera.

“We’re really just trying to give people an opportunity to learn and appreciate this beautiful art form,” says Raksha Singh, Marketing Manager, Ster-Kinekor Cinema Nouveau.

“Often times, people sit through an opera, appreciate its music without necessarily following along the story line,” she says.

“We want people to get a brief background about the opera, take them through the important elements in the music and the historical era during which that opera was performed,” adds Singh.

On May 28, Rosebank Mall, the Johannesburg audience will be first to experience this new initiative by Cinema Nouveau.

Celebrated local singer-turned-director, Marcus Desando—who was seen in the recent production of *Cats*--has been appointed as the guest who will give a brief talk about the upcoming *Armida*.

Tickets to this initiative are limited, interested parties are urged to make their bookings now via [www.sterkinekor.com](http://www.sterkinekor.com), or through the self-service terminals and also by calling Ticketline on 08216789

Ends

For more information on Opera Nights, please visit [www.sterkinekor.com](http://www.sterkinekor.com)

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Total Exposure

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On behalf of:  
Ster-Kinekor Theatres

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**About Cinema Nouveau:**

As a sub-division of Ster-Kinekor Theatres, Cinema Nouveau operates 45 screens, 11 digital cinemas houses and has almost 5 000 seats in 7 sites, spreading over Joburg,

Cape Town and Durban.

Cinema Nouveau holds the prestige of being one of the worlds only dedicated “art cinema” chains, screening ‘art’ titles from cultures all over the world.

It is a differentiated cinema experience and a destination for the discerning film lover, whose passion is the beauty and artistry of the art of film.

Cinema Nouveau sites can be found in the following regions:

**Gauteng:**

Rosebank Mall, Johannesburg

Cedar Square, Fourways

Bedford Centre, Bedford

Brooklyn Mall, Pretoria

**Western Cape:**

Cavendish Square, Claremont, Cape Town

V&A Waterfront, Cape Town

**KwaZulu-Natal:**

Gateway Theatre of Shopping, Durban