



Photo by **David Siccardi** / San Diego Opera

Daniel Catán

La Hija de Rappaccini

Florença en el Amazonas

Salsipuedes

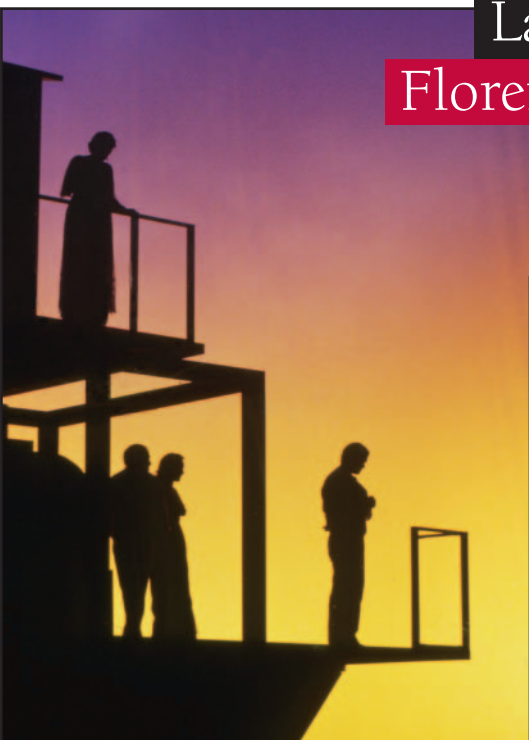


Photo by **George Hixon** / Houston Grand Opera



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Salsipuedes

Libretto by Eliseo Alberto
and Francisco Hinojosa;

English translation by Shane Gasbarra
and Daniel Catán

Duration: Comic Opera in Three Acts,
Full evening

Cast: 3S, Mz, 4T, Bar, B, Speaker
SAT Chorus (24 voices total)

Orchestra: 3(pic).2.5(bcl).2/3.4Ctp.2+btbn.1/
timp.perc/pf.hp/4vc.4db;
4onstage perc

World Premiere:
Houston Grand Opera
29 October 2004

Conductor Guido Maria Guida
Production James Robinson
Set Designer Allen Moyer
Costume Designer Constance Hoffman
Lighting Designer James F. Ingalls



photo courtesy of Daniel Catán

SYNOPSIS

The comic opera is set on the fictional island of Salsipuedes in 1943. When the island's one-boat navy gears up to take on the Nazis, the males of two newly-married couples are mistakenly taken aboard the ship, to the consternation of their wives. The couples are finally reunited in Puerto Alegre, where they learn about love, trust and fidelity. Once reconciled, the couples unearth a treacherous plot by the captain of the ship, resulting in tragedy, sacrifice and new beginnings.

My new opera uses the rhythms [of] the Caribbean. The Caribbean, it's worth recalling, was the great melting pot of three fantastic music cultures. On the one hand there was the European culture brought by so many immigrants from the Continent; there was the very rich legacy from the Middle East brought by the Spanish in particular; and finally, there was the African stream. These elements combined to produce a remarkable result that has barely been explored. I consider the comic opera a very delicate genre. A comedy in this century cannot be the same as it was in the 17th or 18th century. For me, comedy is a very serious matter, because it has to joke about things that are otherwise difficult to discuss, and it must also reflect contemporary issues. You have to draw a smile from the listener and at the same time deliver a very serious message. That is what makes it so very challenging.

—Daniel Catán

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

...[The] premiere of Catán's warmhearted comedy about ordinary people accidentally caught up in the machinations of a corrupt and delusional dictator evoked smiles, chuckles and good feelings...Director James Robinson and set designer Allen Moyer provided a vigorous, colorful production that was perfectly outlandish in look and gesture. Conductor Guido Maria Guida confidently steered an imaginative, rhythmically tricky score using an orchestra without violins or violas.

...A major asset was the literate and deftly imaginative libretto of Eliseo Alberto and Francisco Hinojosa.

With just a few words the pair could establish mood as well as sketch characters and send the action careening forward...Repeatedly, the story inspired Catán to compose very striking individual scenes...Permeated with Afro-Caribbean rhythms, the score had powerful writing for the voices—big duets for the lovers, aching arias for the distressed women, and major scenes for seemingly secondary characters...

-- Charles Ward, *Houston Chronicle*

On Oct. 29, Houston Grand Opera celebrated its 50th anniversary year with its 31st world premiere, Daniel Catán's *Salsipuedes*...Though billed as a Caribbean comedy, this lively opera was unexpectedly dark...The opera alternated between high-spirited crowd scenes, with pungent African drums and Latin rhythms, and rhapsodic vocal writing that recalled *Madama Butterfly* and *La Rondine*...Catán's orchestral originality went beyond his use of unconventional instruments. The orchestra has no violins or violas, and the winds, brass and low strings that remained were used with a refreshing sparseness, sometimes dropping out of the mix altogether...the opera was entertaining and at times very touching.

-- Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*



Above photos by Brett Coomer
Houston Grand Opera

Libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain
Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera,
Seattle Opera and Los Angeles Music Center
Opera, in part through a grant from
Drs. Dennis and Susan Carlyle.

Duration: Opera in Two Acts: 140'

Cast: 2S, Mz, T, 2Bar, B

SATB Chorus

Orchestra: 2(pic).22+bcl.2(cbn)/3221/timp.
4perc/hp.pf/str (4.4.4.4.3)

Premiere: Houston Grand Opera, 25 October 1996

Conductor Vjekoslav Sutej

Director Francesca Zambello

Designer Robert Israel

SYNOPSIS

The steamboat *El Dorado* is sailing down the Amazon in the early 1900s. The passengers are travelling to hear the legendary but intensely private opera singer Florencia Grimaldi sing at the reopening of the theatre in Manaus. Riolobo, a mystical character who can assume many forms introduces the embarking passengers: Paula and Alvaro, a middle-aged couple attempting to rekindle their marriage; Rosalba, a journalist researching a biography on Grimaldi; and Florencia herself, travelling alone and incognito, harbouring a burning desire to find her long-lost lover Cristóbal, a butterfly-hunter, whose love unlocked her staggering powers of musical expression. Once en route, Rosalba accidentally drops her research notes overboard. The Captain's nephew, Arcadio, manages to rescue them, and the pair becomes aware of a strong mutual attraction. The evening concludes as Paula and

Alvaro's attempt at a romantic dinner dissolves into a bitter squabble.

Initially unaware of her identity, the Captain tells Florencia of the fate of Cristóbal, who disappeared without trace in the jungle, thus dashing her dearest ambition. As a heated card game brings out the contrasting sexual and hostile tensions between Rosalba and Arcadio, and Paula and Alvaro, a violent storm brews outside. In saving the ship from being crushed, Alvaro is swept overboard; the Captain is knocked unconscious and despite Arcadio's efforts at the helm, the ship runs aground.

Paula mourns the loss of Alvaro, realizing that it was pride and not lack of love that stood between them. Riolobo appears again mysteriously to return Alvaro to the ship, claiming that Paula's laments saved him from death. Rosalba, distraught that her notebook has been ruined in the



photos by George Hixon, Houston Grand Opera

storm, talks to the incognito Florencia about her research. During the ensuing discussion on Grimaldi, Florencia declares passionately that Grimaldi's gift was a result of her love for Cristóbal. Rosalba realizes that she is talking to her heroine and, hearing her story, decides her own love for Arcadio shouldn't be suppressed.

La Hija de Rappaccini



Photo by David Siccardi / San Diego Opera

Spanish libretto by Juan Tovar, based on the play by Octavio Paz and the short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Duration: Opera in Two Acts: 105'

Cast: S, Mz, 2T, Bar, 3 offstage female voices

Orchestra: 3(pic)+2rec.3(ca).
3(bcl).3/4331/timp.3perc/
pf.cel.hp/str

World Premiere:

Teatro del Palacio de Bellas Artes,
Mexico City, 25 April 1991

American Premiere:

San Diego Opera, 5 March 1994

SYNOPSIS

Catán's setting of *Rappaccini's Daughter* is based on the Nathaniel Hawthorne story, and retold by Mexican Nobel Prize-winning author Octavio Paz. Set during the Italian Renaissance, *Rappaccini's Daughter* is a multi-layered story that deals not only with the scientific struggle of good and evil, but also with the blurring gray lines created as both good and evil merge.

Catán elaborates, "When we reach boundaries of human knowledge we stare into the most profound darkness... There is heaven, but also hell on the other side. A vision can be perverted. An ideal can be made to serve the most horrific and inhumane causes... *Rappaccini's Daughter* is an opera for the 21st century."

Daniel Catán

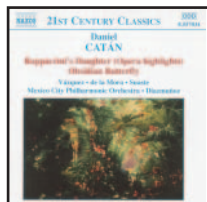
Salsipuedes

Florencia en el Amazonas

La Hija de Rappaccini

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Florencia en el Amazonas
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