

Thoroughly Modern Maestro...

Karen Keltner conducts premieres of operas by Carlisle Floyd and Tobias Picker, two of America's eminent and thoroughly modern composers

COLD SASSY TREE- An Opera by Carlisle Floyd
Opera Carolina - February 20, 22 & 23(m), 2003 at the Belk Theater

THÉRÈSE RAQUIN - An Opera by Tobias Picker
San Diego Opera - March 22, 25, 28 & 30(m), 2003 at the Civic Theater

Karen Keltner, one of the leading woman conductors in opera today, returns to Opera Carolina in February 2003 to conduct the regional premiere of *Cold Sassy Tree*, Carlisle Floyd's charming comic opera, based on the best-selling novel by Olive Ann Burns, about life and love in rural Georgia at the turn of the century. Maestro Keltner is today considered an expert on the Floyd repertoire, having worked closely with the celebrated American composer on numerous occasions as Resident Conductor of the San Diego Opera where she conducted to great acclaim the West Coast premieres of both *Cold Sassy Tree* in 2001 and another Floyd masterpiece, *Of Mice and Men* in 1999. Keltner's invariably skilled reading, vividly communicating to the audience the subtle nuances of Floyd's music (as well as of other contemporary works), is evidence of the "good fit" between 20th century American opera and this petite, energetic and thoroughly modern maestro whose repertoire ranges from *bel canto* to Broadway musicals and for whom conducting modern American opera is an artistically challenging and most gratifying endeavor.

This affinity for contemporary American opera surely will serve Keltner well when she steps up to the podium at the San Diego Opera's West Coast premiere in March 2003 of Tobias Picker's *Thérèse Raquin* - an opera about a love triangle, murder and guilt. Unlike others in the genre which are based on Americana, this opera by the award-winning American composer is adapted from the French novel of the same title by the popular 19th-century writer Emile Zola. The opera, it has been pointed out, remains true to Zola, there being no transpositions in time and place. Thus, while the music is contemporary American, the libretto English and the theme universal, the dramatic material is classic French - a combination that can be comfortably handled by a skilled conductor but none better than Maestro Keltner, an American who hails from the heartland and a certified Francophile whose musical and intellectual arsenal includes advanced degrees in both Music and French. Under the baton of Maestro Keltner, this regional premiere of *Thérèse Raquin* promises to be a unique and exciting musical experience.

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