Week 6: Divos of Cincinnati Opera

1. This American tenor made his professional opera debut here at Cincinnati Opera on March 25, 1987 portraying Hoffmann in *Les contes d’Hoffmann*. Who is he?
   A: Richard Leech


He sang over 175 performances at The Metropolitan Opera where he made his debut in 1989 as Rodolfo. Other roles included Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* and Faust in Boito's *Mefistofele*. His last appearance at The Metropolitan Opera in 2012 in *The Makropulos Affair*.

He now leads the Teaching Young Artist program at Michigan Opera Theater

Richard Leech and Renée Fleming sings from *Manon* Act III Live at the Paris Opera 1997: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HiTCObNEi4

Richard Leech sings from *Rigoletto* with New York City Opera in 1988: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXEkIGBPvWg

2. While his operatic debut wasn’t until 1999, following a successful career as an All-American football player, this bass singer became Cincinnati Opera’s Artistic Advisor in 2017. Who is he?
   A: Morris Robinson

Born in Atlanta, Georgia. He grew up excelling in both sports and music. Eventually, he accepted a scholarship to play for The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina where he was a three-time 1-AAA All-American offensive lineman (for those that don’t know sports, this means he was really good at knocking people down and defending the quarterback).

Later on, an audition arranged for him with the Choral Arts Society of Washington brought back his passion for music. This led to him getting attention from the Boston University Opera and now we are lucky to have him a part of our team.

*Don Giovanni*, with Florida Grand Opera, 2011: https://youtu.be/vgRLRzbeOX8
3. The recipient of a 2017 George London Foundation Award, tenor Aaron Blake has earned international recognition for his creation of the role of Timothy Laughlin in what 2017 Cincinnati Opera premiere?

   **A: Fellow Travelers**

Aaron Blake has earned international recognition for his creation of the role of Timothy Laughlin in Gregory Spears’ Fellow Travelers. Mr. Blake recently made a critically acclaimed debut with the New York City Opera in Peter Eötvös’ operatic adaptation of *Angels in America*. Praised by the New York Times for his for his “youthful fervor and endearing sweet sound” the tenor has found a musical home in a variety of repertoire.

He has performed leading roles with Cincinnati Opera as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Pan in *La Calisto*, and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*. He was to have been with us again this summer for *The Barber of Seville*, but we know he will be back soon!

Aaron Blake sings from *Lucrezia di Lammermoor*, February 17, 2017, in the Finals of the George London Competition

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-Wkt2COKj8

Scene from *Fellow Travelers* from the Cincinnati Opera recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPq-5rKGEs8

4. A Patty favorite, this bass-baritone who performed at the gala honoring Patty’s 35 years also received his Artistic Diploma from CCM. He last performed on the mainstage for Cincinnati Opera in 2014 when he was in the casts of both *Carmen* and *La Calisto*. Who is he?

   **A: Daniel Okulitch**

Okulitch was born in Ottawa, Ontario and was raised in Calgary, Alberta, where he had his operatic debut at the age of 12 while still a boy soprano in the role of Amahl in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with Calgary Opera. He continued to perform throughout his teens, and at age 19 transferred to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music to study with acclaimed pedagogue Richard Miller, where he gained a Bachelor of Music and a Masters in Opera Theater. He later earned another degree here at CCM.

He has also performed on Broadway as Schaunard in the Tony Award winning production of *La bohème* in 2002/03.
Okulitch as Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro* Dallas Opera, 2008: 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcu1y1K49B8

*Brokeback Mountain* world premiere in Madrid, Spain 2014: 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9ph3RP12YE

5. In 1999, Swedish-born baritone, Peter Mattei made his US debut with us in this Mozart titular role known for being a womanizer. What was the opera and role?

A: *Don Giovanni*

Having studied at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, he made the beginning of his career in Europe. He sang the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the first time at the Gothenburg Opera in the 1994–95 season. In the same season, Peter Mattei performed as Figaro in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Royal Swedish Opera.

Following his US premiere, he went on to have his first Met appearance in 2002 as Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

*Don Giovanni* at Teatro alla Scala, 2011:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY8MyJJ7ahE

*Barber of Seville* at the Metropolitan Opera, 2011-2012 season:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ipb9xbXSAy