

Marwan Shamiyeh

Lyric Tenor



Marwan Shamiyeh is a Palestinian from Ramallah who grew up in Kuwait. He lived in the United Kingdom between the ages of 16 and 29, during the formative years when he completed his legal studies and started to study music. Originally intending to practice law, he completed a master-of-laws degree at the London School of Economics, but his wish to sing led him to complete a concert diploma in voice from Trinity College of Music in London and to continue his vocal studies guided by his teacher Iris Dell'Acqua. Contrary to the received wisdom about such moves, his parents reacted with a mixture of feelings ranging from very muted apprehension to outright encouragement and optimism. His first operatic roles included *Tamino* in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre and Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* in concert performances in France and Japan. In performances all over the United Kingdom, in Ireland, and culminating in performances at the Royal Danish

Opera in Copenhagen, he sang *Aufidio* in Mozart's *Lucio Silla* with the European Opera Centre.

Marwan's broad operatic repertoire stretches from Baroque all the way to classical and romantic and has recently included both twentieth-century as well as contemporary music. It includes works in Italian, German, French, Russian, and English. Recently, in Jeffrey Ching's contemporary opera *The Orphan*, he sang in medieval Chinese!

His first long-term assignments took him to Innsbruck, Austria, where he performed major lyric tenor roles, including *Nemorino* in Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *Belmonte* in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*. He ventured further into the German-speaking operatic scene, singing *Camille de Rossillon* in Lehar's *The Merry Widow* at the renowned Aalto Musiktheater, Essen, and singing and recording the same role at the Seefestspiele Mörbisch (Festival on the Lake), an internationally renowned operetta festival in Austria, in 2005. Further engagements have included *Caprice* in Offenbach's *The Voyage to the Moon* at the Stuttgart State Opera. Recent roles include *Lensky* in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, as well as *Pong* in Puccini's *Turandot* in a series of open-air performances, and *Arvino* in Verdi's *I Lombardi* at Theater Erfurt. Concert performances have resulted in recordings of, among others, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* and the *Missa Criolla* by Ramirez. In addition to his native Arabic, Marwan is fluent in English and German.



Marwan Shamiyeh, alias Alfredo, in the operetta *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss.

What does Marwan do in his free time? Surprisingly, he listens to more music. But not to classical music; rather, he prefers a heady mixture of favorite genres from all over the world: fado (a plaintive style of Portuguese popular song accompanied by guitar), tango, flamenco, etc. After the strict vocal guidelines of classical singing, these forms of musical expression feel like a relaxing, exciting, and unfamiliar expansion of the music-listening experience. The melancholy and longing inherent in Asmahan's voice make her his favorite Arab singer. In addition to music, he tries to keep some modicum of knowledge and connection with the politics and economics of the day.

His most important milestone? Years ago, before the start of his career, he asked a well-known Italian vocal consultant whether his voice had the stuff to take him places. She replied, "Well, it has an old-fashioned quality and timbre to it." Not sure whether that was a compliment or a criticism, he asked, "Is that good or bad? What do I do?" His professional life since then, as is the case for almost all classical singers, has consisted of a never-ending learning process about separating the good from the bad in the voice in an effort to move, dazzle, and transport audiences to a different sphere in a way that only music can achieve.

Marwan Shamiyeh, as the scheming gardener Cecco in *Der Triumph der Liebe*, an opera with music by J.S. Bach set to a play by Pierre Carlet de Marivaux.

