

## OPERA NEWS



Gordon Gietz gravitates toward high-flying tenor roles literally, in the case of Camille Raquin, the cuckolded husband and, later, vengeful ghost of Tobias Picker's *Thérèse Raquin*. For the world premiere in Dallas (in 2001), Gietz soared high above the stage, suspended by wires, in a long, climactic sequence. "Every time," he says, "there was a moment of terror, but after that, there was such a sense of freedom. I'm hardly Cirque du Soleil material, but it felt great." Gietz returns to the role of Camille for *Thérèse's* West Coast premiere, in San Diego next month (March 22-30).

Camille, a whining invalid, "is inert, he is nothing, he is a zero, a cipher, his whole life is a nothing. Only in death does he find his power," says Gietz. "Some of the music Tobias had written for me was so *vivant*. He said, 'You need to be more sickly.' I said, 'Honestly, I'm not sure I can [do that and] sing this 6/8 passage at top speed and then run up these stairs. Maybe you should put me in a wheelchair.'"

Perhaps to offset his boyish looks and minty-fresh sound, Gietz brings a hint of wildness and danger even to such standard-rep parts as Alfredo and Don Ottavio. "I can totally understand [Alfredo's] feeling of being betrayed - that feeling of insane jealousy," says the thirtysomething Calgary native. "Maybe it's a Canadian thing, but ... I'm always surprised when people are two-faced and treacherous. I find that really hard to deal with."

Last December, Gietz created the role of Stingo in the world premiere of Nicholas Maw's *Sophie's Choice*, his Covent Garden debut. For a tenor who emphasizes theatrical values, rehearsals with director Trevor Nunn were exciting: for several

days, the cast treated the libretto as a spoken drama before starting work with conductor Simon Rattle.

Noting that opera "is a visual art," Gietz works out regularly. "I have friends - they're lovely - who say, 'Oh, good, you're still the same weight. I don't want you to get fat like those other tenors....' I don't think enough people in my profession have benefited from people who were not afraid to call a spade a spade. I've always been lucky that my friends and colleagues have not been afraid to say, 'O.K., you're full of shit.' I think that's what's made me happier than anything."

Article by William V. Madison / Photo by Martin Gram