

21C ARTISTS TO WATCH

Q&A WITH TENOR JAMES VALENTI

The year 2010 marks major debuts in leading roles for James Valenti at the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden and Paris Opera. At 6'5" the New Jersey-born tenor not only cuts a handsome figure onstage, but is also lauded for a voice of Italianate beauty. Last season Valenti was named Dallas Opera's Maria Callas Debut Artist of the Year, and of his Rodolfo with that company, the Dallas News-Telegram wrote: "Think George Clooney with a voice that can melt your heart." We recently asked the 32-year-old all-American guy about a few of his favorite things.

1. A few works of classical music that you adore:

Favorite composers are Beethoven and Puccini. I also really love Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

2. Classical music recordings that you treasure:

My first recordings of *La Bohème* with Pavarotti and Freni, and *Aida* with Corelli and Nilsson. I would listen to them over and over again in college.

3. Favorite non-classical musicians and/or recordings:

John Legend, Billy Joel, Snow Patrol, ColdPlay... I also LOVE 80s music!

4. Music that makes you cry – any genre:

Sappy commercials. I travel a lot, so any about family and being away from loved ones....

5. Live music performance (s) you attended – any genre – that you'll never forget:

Billy Joel and Elton John together in concert

6. A few relatively recent films you love:

Amelie, *Before Sunrise*, the *Bourne Identity* and *X Men* movies... I also enjoy a good, cheesy, romantic comedy

7. A few films you consider classics:

The *James Bond* and *Indiana Jones* movies, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*

8. A book that is important to you:

Anything by Deepak Chopra; he is so insightful and just brilliant

9. Things about yourself that you're most proud of:

I've worked diligently to achieve success, and take my art form very seriously. I'm very grateful for my family and close friends. I feel I've remained grounded and rooted, thanks to their support and love.

10. What's the highlight of your career to date?

That's hard to say, as I've had many great experiences. Working with Anna Netrebko in Salzburg was fantastic. It's always a highlight for me when I return to Minnesota Opera. I started my career there and they always make me feel welcome and appreciated.

11. What is a role you'd like to sing one day and why?

The poet Andrea Chenier. It's an amazing role, full of lyrical soaring lines and dramatic passages. Plus there are three arias for tenor and three big duets.

12. Thing(s) about yourself that you're embarrassed by:

I don't like when people get the wrong impression of me. People sometimes think I'm pretentious or arrogant until they get to know me and find out that I'm pretty down to earth. I do have a taste for the finer things and I'm an artist, but I'm very normal as those close to me can attest.

13. Three things you can't live without:

My family, the sun, free time

14. "When I want to get away from it all I..."

...Hang out at my rooftop pool, go sailing, and hit a day spa.

15. "People are surprised to find out that I..."

...am a huge dork. Also, that my first opera role was the Emperor in *Turandot*.

16. "My favorite cities are..."

New York, Tokyo, Florence

17. "I have a secret crush on..."

Monica Bellucci, Natalie Portman and Brooke Burke

18. "My most obvious guilty pleasure is..."

Watching *The View*... I just love the hot topics

19. "I'd really love to meet..."

Tom Ford and Richard Branson. Billy Joel and John McEnroe, too!

20. "I never understood why..."

...People get so obsessed with professional sports.

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