

2007

# DEATH OF LUCIANO PAVAROTTI

## The King of the High C's



LucianoPavarotti.com

*Luciano Pavarotti*

2007: Following a long battle with pancreatic cancer, Luciano Pavarotti, the most famous opera singer of recent times, has died, aged 71. For millions of people he was the face of grand opera and, at his peak, the brilliance of his voice was incomparable. Known as the "King of the High C's" he became internationally famous in the early 1960s, thanks in part to soprano Joan Sutherland who championed his talent. He began his career at a time when the opera world was lacking really strong tenors, and had for many years been dominated by major sopranos like Sutherland and Maria Callas.

His American breakthrough came at the New York Met in February 1972 when he sang the role of Tonio in Donizetti's "Daughter of the Regiment" and hit a series of high C's which created a frenzy that never abated. The pinnacle of his fame came in 1990 when his recording of Puccini's "Nessun dorma" was chosen as the 1990 World Cup theme song, and sold in its millions.

He was a very shrewd self-promoter and followed this success with a series of massive outdoor concerts: as the Three Tenors, he, Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras sold out stadia around the world, and their accompanying CD was one of the biggest-selling classical recordings of all time. He also raised money for children in war-torn countries by performing a series of high-profile benefit concerts titled "Pavarotti and Friends" with fellow celebrities such as Bono, Elton John, Suzanne Vega and Sting.

He was never a great actor, and his ever-increasing weight made him an unlikely romantic hero, but for a quarter of a century his name alone filled opera houses throughout the world and earned him a fortune. In later years his increasing bulk made it impossible for him to move on stage. He would frequently cancel at the last moment, thus infuriating his promoters and his fans, and in 1989, the Lyric Opera of Chicago tore up his contract and banned him from the stage. In 1992, he was caught lip-syncing during a concert broadcast by the BBC. His farewell performance at the Met in 2002 was cancelled. His last few years were accompanied by a scandal in which he divorced his wife of many years and married a much younger woman, thus estranging himself from his four daughters and leading to a prolonged legal dispute. But in spite of this, he remained the most famous opera singer of the age, and his recordings are still cited as the benchmark of the glory of the tenor voice.

## Steven Pimlott - "most versatile director of the age" "Harry Potter" shows his stuff

2007: Steven Pimlott, who has died of cancer at the age of 53, was one of the most successful, inventive and versatile theatre directors of the age. His work ranged from major operas with Opera North, Scottish and Australian Opera, to Shakespeare at the RSC, Agatha Christie in the West End, musicals like Sondheim's "Sunday in the Park with George" and "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" at the London Palladium, and "Bombay Dreams" at the Apollo Victoria. At the time of his death he was directing Zoe Wanamaker in a revival of Tennessee Williams's "The Rose Tattoo". The production has been taken over by his friend, Nicholas Hytner. Just six weeks before his death he had been awarded the OBE for his services to theatre in this year's New Year's Honours

2007: Peter Shaffer's 1973 drama "Equus" has been revived at the Gielgud Theatre with Richard Griffiths as Martin Dysart and 17 year old Daniel Radcliffe as Alan Strang—a role originally created by Peter Firth. There has been huge interest in this revival since Daniel Radcliffe is known to millions of cinema-goers, and especially children, as Harry Potter in a whole series of hugely successful films. Not only does this former child-actor appear in his first live play, but he is also required to appear in a full frontal nude scene.

## Dame of the British Empire Not so Unlucky Scottish Play

2007: Known to millions of TV viewers as the camp Mr Humphries in the TV series "Are You Being Served" which ran from 1972 to 1985, John Inman was acknowledged in the theatre world as one of the very great pantomime dames of modern times. He specialised in playing Mother Goose, and superbly captured the pathos as well as the outrageous comedy which marks the greatest exponents of this classic panto role. He has died at the age of 71.

2007: Patrick Stewart, best known for films like "Star Trek—The Next Generation", is giving one of the greatest performances of Macbeth in living memory. In a gripping production by Rupert Goold, set in a 1950s Soviet style state and framed in the manner of a gangster film, Stewart is said to be giving the performance of a lifetime. The production at the Gielgud Theatre originated in Chichester and has been unanimously acclaimed for outstanding all-round brilliance.

Initial press reports could not resist cheap jokes about Harry Potter "waving his wand" and a number of serious

critics found the play a bit dated and old fashioned. However, there has been much praise for Daniel Radcliffe's own performance - and he has been acknowledged as an intelligent, serious actor of considerable talent, and not just a child film-star. Already there is talk of "Equus" with Daniel Radcliffe transferring to Broadway—quite an achievement for a actor still in his teens.

