



*SPECIAL JOINT EVENT
in collaboration with Opera Network*

L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA



**Claudio
Monteverdi**

Cremona 1567 - Venezia 1643

9th

**Florence
International
Choir & Orchestra
Festival
FICF 2020
29 - 31 July**

Cloister of Ognissanti, Firenze
Wednesday 29 July 2020, 21.00

Villa Paolina, Viareggio
Tuesday 4 August 2020, 21.00
in collaboration with 66° Festival Pucciniano

L'Incoronazione di Poppea

Opera in a prologue and three acts of **Giovanni Francesco Busenello**

music by **Claudio Monteverdi**

site specific performance

General management **Carla Zanin**

Artistic Director **Paolo Belloci**

Conductor **Federico Bardazzi**

Video Scenographies **Carla Zanin, Ines Cattabriga**

Cappella Musicale Santa Felicità

Ensemble Etruria Barocca

ENSEMBLE SAN FELICE

Characters & Performers

Poppea Oksana Maltseva *soprano*

Nerone Mira Dozio *soprano*

Fortuna Susanna Rigacci (4/8), Martina Barreca (29/7) *soprano*

Virtù Beatriz Oyarzabal Pinan *soprano*

Amore Letizia Dei *soprano*

Drusilla, Venere Martina Barreca *soprano*

Ottavia Choi Seoyeon *soprano*

Pallade Beatriz Oyarzabal Pinan *soprano*

Valletto Jiao Miao *soprano*

Damigella Michela Mazzanti *soprano*

Ottone Floriano D'Auria *alto*

Nutrice Anna Chiara Mugnai *alto*

Arnalta Ramona Peter (29/9), Elisabetta Vuocolo (4/8) *alto*

Soldato I Enkebatu *tenor*

Soldato II Yuan Jianguang *tenor*

Liberto Enkebatu *tenor*

Lucano Enkebatu *tenor*

Seneca Jing Shuheng *bass*

Mercurio Ivan Volkov *bass*

Littore Ivan Volkov *bass*

Famigliari Anita Della Mercede, Michela Mazzanti,

Anna Chiara Mugnai, Ramona Peter *altos*

Enkebatu, Yuan Jianguang *tenors*

Ivan Volkov, Jing Shuheng *basses*

Tribuni Enkebatu, Yuan Jianguang *tenors*

Ivan Volkov, Jing Shuheng *basses*

Amori Anita Della Mercede, Michela Mazzanti,

Jiao Miao, Oyarzabal Pinan *sopranos*

Anna Chiara Mugnai, Ramona Peter, Elisabetta Vuocolo *altos*

Mime Luigi Benassai

Instruments

recorders Johanna Lopez

bombarda Cesare Pierozzi

violins Kevin Mucaj, Ana Aline Valentim

viola Manuela Masenello

cello Stefano Aioli

doublebass Giovanni Biancalana

theorbo, baroque guitar Andrea Benucci

organ Giacomo Benedetti

harpsicord Dimitri Betti

percussions Cecilia Iannandrea

Juvenes Cantores della Cattedrale di Sarzana

Choir Master Alessandra Montali

Sopranos Elsa Canepa, Gabriella Dobre, Gaia Forcelli, Matilde Leonardi,
Gemma Venturelli, Rachele Zamperini

Altos Emma Giannini, Manuela Grazioso, Elsa Poletto

Tenors Pietro Bernardini, Simone Emili

Basses Gaetano Canepa, Zeno Canepa, Emmanuele Casula, Giuseppe
Landini, Corrado Martinetti

Stage Department

Angelica Rindi, Anna Galeno

Direction Department

Luigi Benassai

Audio, Video, Lights, Photos Department

Andrea Cardelli, Ettore Mariotti, Elena Romoli

Hall and Staging Department

Michela Mazzanti

The immortal hymn to love in Monteverdi's masterpiece

The event opens the 9th FICF – Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival 2020 produced Ensemble San Felice, in co-production with Opera Network with the direction of Federico Bardazzi, the videoscenographies by Carla Zanin and Ines Cattabriga.

The production follows the staging of the opera created in Florence in January 2020 and the recording of the Cd published in July 202 from Bongiovanni Label. The sumptuous opera Monteverdiana, a special Opera Network event curated by Carla Zanin Paolo Bellocchi, and Federico Bardazzi. The event will be performed also in the contest of 66° Festival Pucciniano.

The cast and instrumental group with original instruments are international and are made up of young talents and renowned musicians from all over the world: Italy, France, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Albania, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, China, Mongolia inland, Korea.

L'incoronazione di Poppea is a milestone in the history of music and the high point of the early baroque. Its libretto combines love scenes and tragedy interspersed with comic relief after the manner of Shakespeare and the wide range of characters includes allegories, gods and demigods and humans both high and low born. Musically, recitatives alternate with airs and verse numbers and certain instruments are used for particular characters. There are few choral pieces, although their quality is outstanding: the mixed voices of the family members in Seneca's death scene, the male voices of the tribunes and consuls glorifying Rome and the female voices of the Amori in the three choral numbers of the final scene celebrating the wedding of Poppea and Nerone.

Federico Bardazzi has analyzed the expressive aspects of the score so that the music would bring out the nature of the characters and has worked on the variety of tone colour available in the basso continuo associated with the "affetti" throughout the opera and hence the association of particular instruments with the main characters.

Thus the organ accompanies Nerone as a lover in scenes III and X of Act 1 while his authority as emperor is underscored by the addition of cello and double-bass in Act 3. The harpsichord is intended to express Poppea's sweet, capricious nature. Theorbo and guitar provide support in the many versified sections and scenes featuring the doubts and ambiguities of Ottone. And the regal Ottavia bears her suffering austere-ly acked by organ and double-bass only (16') with no further intervention by the cello (8') a tonal combination typical of the music of the Spanish counter-reformation and which greatly influenced Italian culture and music in the late renaissance and early baroque.

In the strophic passages (f.e. Ottone Atto Primo, Scena I and ScenaX) the plucked instruments and the flute are highlighted, lightly inspired by the tradition of the Renaissance "song" and villanelle. This modality stands in virtuous contrast with the accompaniment of some recitatives in which the legacy enhances the dramatic intensity of Octavia (f.e. Third Act, Scene VI), Nerone's majesty (f.e. Third Act, Scene IV) and the sober solemnity of Seneca's wisdom.

The instrumental arrangements are highly diversified, ranging from soprano and guitar, through passages for strings only to exuberant tutti sections with percussion.

A hallmark of Bardazzi's approach to performance of 17th century repertoire is the interaction of treble instruments with voices in choral numbers, duets, versified pieces and airs and also foregrounding those instruments in certain sections of the opera identified with a given character, such as the instrumental ritornelli in the refrains "per me guerreggia amor" and "felice Drusilla". The many tone colours of this broad palette valorize the instrumental writing in the vocal numbers, which is in keeping with the dictates of Monteverdi's seconda prattica. This ongoing dialogue between voices and instruments makes the pace of the opera particularly lively and the rhythms compelling, as does the uptempo approach to the vocal parts in the many giga and corrente dance passages throughout the score.

L'incoronazione di Poppea, the last extraordinary masterpiece which Monteverdi composed for the stage, is one of the most interesting and

mysterious works in the history of opera, being the first of its kind to abandon the supernatural and mythological for the human passions of real historical characters. The result is as surprising as it is intense. The present recording is based on the edition curated by Clifford Bartlett (The Early Music Company, 1993) in the Venice version of 1642. However, it does not use scene 7 of Act 2: this was added later to give the famous singer Anna Renzi a larger part; neither does it use scene 7 of Act 2 which is missing and presumed lost. The libretto is the same as for the performance overseen by Alan Curtis at the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in 2011.

The coronation of *Poppea*, the last extraordinary masterpiece composed by Monteverdi for the theater, is one of the most mysterious and interesting titles in the history of melodrama. The first work that left the skies of mythology to descend into the dimension of human passions, with characters that really existed.

The final effect is surprisingly intense.

The event is produced in collaboration with Konzert Opera Florence and with the support of the Tuscany Region and Fondazione Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze.

Carla Zanin

Synopsis

Act I

Ottone, Poppea's lover, stands at dawn outside the palace of his beloved, venting his amorous passion; but seeing Nerone's guards asleep in the street while Nerone himself is happily inside Poppea's house, Ottone laments his misfortunes.

Nerone's soldiers awake; while complaining about the discomforts of the previous night, they curse the love of Poppea and Nerone, and gossip about the court.

Nerone and Poppea, fondly embracing, bid farewell to one another with tender caresses.

Poppea talks with Arnalta, her old confidante, of her ambitions; Arnalta warns her to put small trust in great men, or Fortuna.

The empress Ottavia tells her sorrows to her attendant, Nutrice, and condemns the faults of her husband Nerone. Nutrice suggests that she take new lovers; but Ottavia perseveres in her afflictions.

Seneca consoles Ottavia and exhorts her to be steadfast. Ottavia's page, Valletto, makes fun of Seneca. Ottavia leaves to pray in the temple.

Seneca speculates on the transitory grandeur of this world.

Nerone declares to Seneca that he will follow his own wishes in marrying Poppea. Appealing to moral and political reason, Seneca tries to dissuade him, but Nerone, in a fit of rage, dismisses him.

Scene 9 Poppea and Nerone discourse on their happiness. Nerone promises to make her empress. Seneca is slandered by Poppea, and Nerone angrily decrees his death.

Ottone accuses Poppea of faithlessness; she disdains him scornfully, telling him that she is Nerone's.

Ottone, in despair, rages against Poppea.

Rejected by Poppea, Ottone returns to his former love, Drusilla, and swears fidelity to her. Drusilla rejoices in her regained love: and so ends the first act.

Act II

Mercury announces to Seneca that he will die on that day; undaunted by the horrors of death, the latter gives thanks to Heaven.

Seneca receives the death sentence which Nerone has decreed. Steadfast, Seneca prepares to leave this world.

Seneca consoles the members of his household who try to dissuade him from death, and orders them to prepare the bath in which he will die.

The page Valletto and Damigella, a maid of the empress, amorously jest together.

Nerone, having heard of Seneca's death, together with a friend Lucano, sings amorously, delirious with Poppea's love.

The empress Ottavia commands Ottone to kill Poppea, under threat of

her imperial rage, and to disguise himself as a woman for his own safety. Ottone, deeply grieved, leaves in confusion.

Drusilla rejoices, consoled by Ottone's vows, and Valletto banters with Nutrice about her old age. Ottone reveals to Drusilla that under Ottavia's order, he must kill Poppea, and asks her for her garments so that he may disguise himself. Drusilla agrees to give not only her clothes, but her help and secrecy as well.

Poppea, rejoicing at the death of Seneca, prays to Amore that her fortunes may prosper. She decides to rest in the garden and is lulled by Arnalta's lullaby.

Amore hides near Poppea while she is asleep, to prevent her death.

Amore, disguised as Drusilla, enters the garden in order to kill her, but Amore prevents him. Poppea awakens and Ottone (who is thought to be Drusilla) escapes. Amore declares that having saved Poppea he will crown her empress that very day; and so ends the second act.

Act III

Drusilla rejoices, hoping soon to hear the news of the death of her rival Poppea.

Arnalta comes to seize Drusilla, who bemoans her fate.

Nerone questions Drusilla about the attempted murder. Though innocent, in order to save Ottone, she confesses to having tried to kill Poppea, and is therefore condemned to death.

Ottone, seeing that the innocent Drusilla has been sentenced, reveals himself as guilty of the crime and confesses that he acted under Ottavia's orders; whereupon Nerone spares his life, condemning him and Drusilla to exile. Nerone decrees the repudiation of Ottavia and orders that she be exiled.

Nerone swears to Poppea that she will be his bride that very day.

Repudiated by Nerone, Ottavia leaves alone, weeping as she abandons her country and her family.

Arnalta enjoys her new-found status, and exults in her contentment. Nerone solemnly attends the coronation of Poppea. Amore crowns Poppea as goddess of beauty on earth: and so ends the opera.



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