

For their 50th anniversary: Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik bring Pietro Antonio Cesti's 'Il pomo d'oro' back to life after more than 350 years

To mark their 50th anniversary, the **Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik** are celebrating with a spectacular operatic rediscovery: **Pietro Antonio Cesti's** monumental Baroque opera **'Il pomo d'oro'** will be performed in its complete form for the first time since its world premiere in 1668. This complete performance has been made possible by a reconstruction of the lost music from two acts, created especially for the festival by their Musical Director, **Ottavio Dantone**.

Originally lasting more than eight hours and featuring 47 roles, the work is regarded as the very embodiment of Baroque court opera. As at its premiere, it will be presented over two consecutive evenings. Together with 20 soloists, a choir, two dance companies and **Accademia Bizantina**, Ottavio Dantone will bring this masterpiece – long considered impossible to stage – back to the theatre. The production is directed by the Italian stage director **Fabio Ceresa**. The three performances will take place on 7 and 8, 11 and 12, and 15 and 16 August at the Tiroler Landestheater.

'Il pomo d'oro' was a particular challenge because lost sections of the opera had to be reconstructed. Yet, for the 50th anniversary of Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik, it seemed to me the ideal choice. I hope this extraordinary opera will inspire the same delight and sense of wonder in today's audiences as it did at its premiere in the 17th century. It was, after all, regarded as the greatest operatic spectacle of its age.'

— Ottavio Dantone, Musical Director of Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik

Magnificence, extravagance and spectacular stage effects made 'Il pomo d'oro' a sensation in 1668. Pietro Antonio Cesti, one of the leading opera composers of the early Baroque period, first served as Kapellmeister at the Habsburg court in Innsbruck before entering the service of the Imperial Court in Vienna. It was there that he composed 'Il pomo d'oro' for the celebrations surrounding the wedding of Emperor Leopold I and Margarita Teresa of Spain.

This gives 'Il pomo d'oro' a close connection to Innsbruck's own operatic history. Yet the opera virtually disappeared from the repertoire. Its enormous production requirements, together with the loss of the music for Acts III and V, turned it into a legend for centuries. For the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik, Ottavio Dantone reconstructed the missing sections using surviving fragments and other compositions by Cesti, allowing audiences to experience the work once again as a complete whole for the first time since its premiere.

The story unfolds over the course of two evenings, telling the tale of Eris' famous golden apple – the fateful Judgement of Paris that sets the Trojan War in motion – framed by a world of the Olympian gods that is as magnificent as it is unexpectedly humorous.

Alongside Ottavio Dantone and stage director Fabio Ceresa, **Nikolaus Webern** is responsible for the set design, while **Giuseppe Palella** has designed the costumes. In 2023, Palella was named 'Costume Designer of the Year' by the specialist magazine Opernwelt. The cast also includes several former prize



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winners of the International Cesti Competition for Baroque Opera 'Pietro Antonio Cesti', among them **Shira Patchornik** (First Prize, 2021), **Sophie Rennert** (Second Prize, 2016) and **Giacomo Nanni** (Third Prize, 2023). The production is further complemented by the **NovoCanto** Choir and the two dance companies **Street Motion Studio** and **Associazione Culturale Fattoria Vittadini**.

With this monumental rediscovery, the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik are making a powerful statement as they celebrate their 50th anniversary. Since 1976, the festival has been among the world's leading events dedicated to historically informed performance and has earned an international reputation for rediscovering and reviving forgotten operas from the 17th and 18th centuries.

From 24 July to 30 August 2026, the anniversary programme combines this tradition with concerts, opera productions and the **International Cesti Competition for Baroque Opera 'Pietro Antonio Cesti'**. The competition's participants will also appear on stage at the **Barockoper:Jung**, performing **Handel's 'Atalanta'**. This way, the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik build a bridge between Innsbruck's rich musical heritage and the future of Early Music.

