

Innsbruck Festival of Early Music – Press Release

2017 Innsbruck Festival of Early Music “O Love, she said...”

450 years of Monteverdi

Baptised on 15 May 1567 in Cremona, Claudio Zuan Antonio Monteverdi's impact on Western music culture is virtually second to none. By “inventing” the basso ostinato alone, his influence goes as far as jazz and rock, and his operas have had a lasting effect on the development of music theatre. Ever since the Monteverdi Choir sang some of his madrigals under the direction of John Eliot Gardiner at the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music in 1977, the composer's music has been closely and continually linked to the Festival. The first staged production of a baroque opera as part of the Festival was Monteverdi's “L'incoronazione di Poppea” in 1980 (musical direction: Alan Curtis). In the Monteverdi year of 1993 – the 350th anniversary of his death – René Jacobs conducted performances of Monteverdi's opera “**Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria**”. Incidentally, Alessandro De Marchi made his debut at the Innsbruck Festival as a harpsichordist with the opera orchestra Concerto Vocale in that production. Now he will conduct the same opera in his position as Artistic Director of the Festival in the Monteverdi year of 2017 – the 450th anniversary of his birthday – at the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music.

The production from Oslo by Den Norske Opera & Ballett unites some of the leading experts in baroque opera under the direction of Ole Anders Tandberg on the Festival stage: tenor Kresimir Spicer in the title role, mezzo-soprano Christine Rice as Penelope, countertenor David Hansen as Ulisse's son Telemaco, soprano Nina Bernsteiner in the roles of Giuno and L'Amore, mezzo-soprano Ann-Beth Solvang as Minerva and Fortuna, and tenor Jeffrey Francis in the role of Eumaiο.

The cadence of love

Monteverdi takes centre stage in the concert programme of the 2017 Festival as well. Rinaldo Alessandrini will perform Monteverdi's epochal sacred-music work, the “Marian Vespers”, with his ensemble Concerto Italiano. Austrian lutenist Christina Pluhar and her ensemble L'Arpeggiata will open the cycle of Ambras Castle Concerts with the programme “Teatro d'Amore”. The main emphasis here will be on Monteverdi's secular madrigals, which he composed for the most part at the court of Duke Gonzaga in Mantua. Monteverdi introduced a new cadence of love and passion to music, as is



palpable in the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, in Penelope's arias and in the famous laments. The first words of the "Lamento della Ninfa" will accompany both the performers and the audience as a leitmotif in a figurative sense all through the 2017 Innsbruck Festival: "O Love, she said..."

Female characters, musicians and heroines

Courageous heroines of opera and saintly consolers, legendary female characters from mythology and inspired musicians from then and now are another focus of the Festival programme. The earliest preserved Marian vespers songs from the Middle Ages, which will be performed by the Mala Punica ensemble ("Jubila Faventina" on 19/8), are dedicated to the Mother of God, as are songs of the Islamic religion, which will be interpreted by Muslim singer Yasemin Sannino in an "Open Mind" concert ("Alba Maryam" on 16/8). Alessandro De Marchi will conduct Alessandro Stradella's oratorio "San Giovanni Battista" in Innsbruck Cathedral, taking up a dramatic sacred-music piece 25 years after its previous performance at the Festival. In it, the character of Salome dominates the action in an opera-like manner. The composer and singer Barbara Strozzi, who was also a student of Monteverdi's successor, Francesco Cavalli, was a star on the northern Italian music scene of the mid-17th century. A Festival concert each is dedicated to her ("Reflections of love" on 1/8) and to Bach's second wife and muse, the singer Anna Magdalena Bach ("Bach and his muse" on 17/8).

Octavia and Pygmalion

Awe-inspiring female characters also take centre stage in the other two opera productions of the 2017 Festival summer: firstly, Nero's wife Octavia in Reinhard Keiser's celebrated work for the Hamburg opera, "**The Roman Unrest, or The Noble-Minded Octavia**" – a performance of BAROQUE OPERA:YOUNG with a cast made up entirely of singers from the 2016 Cesti competition. Secondly, the muse-come-to-life sculpted by the artist **Pygmalion** in the ballet opera of the same name by the French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau, which marks the debut of Christophe Rousset as an opera conductor at the Festival, directing the Les Talens Lyriques ensemble. Monteverdi's Renaissance origins will feature as clearly in the 2017 Festival programme as his influence on music up to the late baroque period.

A tribute to Ferdinand

2017 not only marks the 450th anniversary of Monteverdi's birthday, it is also the 450th anniversary of the commencement of Archduke Ferdinand II's reign in Tyrol. On a special day in his honour, the Cinquecento ensemble will perform madrigals and motets written by composers who dedicated collections of their works to the ruler (e.g. Andrea Gabrieli) or had close ties with him (Orlando di Lasso). Peter Waldner will play music from Ferdinand's time to illustrate scenes from the life of a baroque duke on the Renaissance organ, the so-called "organo di legno", which was brought from Italy to Innsbruck by Ferdinand's second wife, Anna Caterina Gonzaga.

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Virtuosos of early music

Further female artists such as singers Arianna Vendittelli, Suzanne Jerosme, Mariana Florès, Nuria Rial and Sophie Rennert as well as violinists Isabelle Faust and Veronika Skuplik will perform on Amor's wings at the 2017 Festival. Innsbruck will also welcome virtuosos of early music such as flutists Maurice Steger and Pedro Memelsdorff as well cellist Marco Ceccato. Ensembles performing in the scope of the 2017 Festival are: Academia Montis Regalis, the Company of Music, the Marini Consort Innsbruck, Musica Antiqua Latina and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

For more information and printable photos, please visit:

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