

Press Release of the Salzburg Festival

Peter Sellars to Deliver Keynote Address at the Opening of the 2019 Salzburg Festival



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(SF, 17 May 2019) The American director Peter Sellars will deliver the keynote address during the opening ceremony of the 2019 Salzburg Festival at the Felsenreitschule on 27 July 2019. The title of his speech is “Listening to the Ocean: Planetary Change and Cultural Action – The meaning and urgency of ‘ecological civilization’ in the next generation”.

“Peter Sellars is the ideal speaker, or, more correctly, the ideal speaker to rouse us from our lethargy in these turbulent, disturbing times in world politics. Amidst World War I, Max Reinhardt imagined the Salzburg Festival, deeply convinced of the power of art. This very conviction also lends Peter Sellars’ productions their power,” says Festival President **Helga Rabi-Stadler**.

The American director Peter Sellars, born in 1957, is one of the world’s most important opera and drama directors. His innovative interpretations of masterworks and his collaborations with an extraordinary spectrum of artists have earned him an outstanding international reputation. Opera productions have taken him to the Dutch National Opera, the English National Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Paris Opéra and the San Francisco Opera.

At the Salzburg Festival, Peter Sellars made his debut in 1992, during the first year of the artistic directorship of his long-time collaborator Gerard Mortier. At the time, his production of Olivier Messiaen’s spiritual opera *Saint François d’Assise* became a symbol of the “new Salzburg”.

Markus Hinterhäuser also values the impressive, politically powerful interpretations of Peter Sellars’ productions. In 2017 he entrusted the first opera premiere of his tenure as artistic director of the Festival to Sellars. Together with conductor Teodor Currentzis, Peter Sellars presented Mozart’s late opera *La clemenza di Tito* as a moving vision of the power of justice and reconciliation at the Felsenreitschule. During the 2019 Festival summer, the ingenious duo dedicates itself to another *opera seria* by Mozart, *Idomeneo*.

Peter Sellars has directed several important arts festivals in the past, including the Los Angeles Festival in 1990 and 1993 and the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 2002. In Vienna, he was the artistic director of New Crowned Hope in 2006, a monthlong festival celebrating Mozart's 250th birthday, to which he invited artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to create new work in the fields of music, theatre, dance, film, visual arts and architecture.

Peter Sellars is a distinguished professor in the Department of World Arts and Culture at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a resident curator of the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado. He was a mentor for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. He is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize for contributions to European culture and the Gish Prize. He is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Science. In 2014 he won the prestigious Polar Music Prize and was named "Artist of the Year" by *Musical America*.

"Peter Sellars is one of the artists who showed me what musical theatre can be – and must be. He believes in the power of the arts to move us, overwhelming us with his curiosity and his enthusiasm, time and again," says Artistic Director **Markus Hinterhäuser**. "I am fascinated by the seriousness, honesty and insistency with which Peter Sellars reflects upon our world, probing great works of art for their meaning here and now."

The Festival's opening ceremony takes place at the Felsenreitschule on **Saturday, 27 July, at 11 am.**