

Press Text: Terrace Talk *Idomeneo*



Peter Sellars and Teodor Currentzis. Photos: SF/Anne Zeuner

(SF, 19 July 2019) Between Peter Sellars and Teodor Currentzis, sometimes it is hard to distinguish who is the director and who the conductor, says dramaturge Antonio Cuenca Ruiz. One thing they both agree upon is that working together again in Salzburg is an artistic dream come true – which they emphasized during the Terrace Talk on this year’s opening opera, Mozart’s *Idomeneo*.

The point of the production is to point out problems, says conductor Teodor Currentzis. Who could be more suitable for that than Peter Sellars? The term director does not do him justice. “He is far more than that. In his work, he invites us to share his spiritual practice,” says the conductor. “He is all about communication, leading us all toward solutions for our problems and focusing entirely on the human aspect, all with enormous energy. It is a privilege to work with him.” Nor does Peter Sellars hold back with praise for the conductor. “What distinguishes Teodor is his gift of bringing light to unexpected places. He is a true visionary,” says the director. He describes observing how impressively Teodor Currentzis created an “atmospheric holistic experience” during the first rehearsal with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra. Measure for measure, note for note, he discussed every detail with the musicians. With this working method, he manages to create spaces in which the singers can unlock their potential to the fullest.

Mozart’s other *opera seria*, *La clemenza di Tito*, which the two staged at the Salzburg Festival two years ago to immense acclaim, is about forgiveness, says moderator Antonio Cuenca Ruiz. *Idomeneo* is about the realisation that it is time to stop and give a new generation a new chance, Teodor Currentzis adds. “If we do not rethink our positions now,” he says, “we may not exist in 100 years.” He also alludes to the father-son conflict in the opera: “We should stop bearing guilt, and transferring it to our children and grandchildren. Guilt cannot heal mankind.”



Lemi Ponifasio, Teodor Currentzis and Peter Sellars.

“Worldwide climate change is a huge challenge,” the director says. No matter whether in Indonesia, Paris or New York, he describes it as a global problem for which a new form of communication must be found. “We must overcome all the political and ethnic boundaries,” he says. The theme of the ocean is ancient and familiar from mythology. But this ocean is not just a mass of water: no, the ocean consists of a million living beings. “We must learn to negotiate with the ocean and make contact with it,” says Peter Sellars.

Therefore, he considers Lemi Ponifasio, born in Samoa in the Pacific, the perfect choreographer for this production. He first worked with Peter Sellars in 2006, he says. At the time, he flew to Kiribati, an island in Polynesia, which will probably be one of the first to disappear from the map if the sea level keeps rising. As he began talking with the natives, no one knew Mozart, Ponifasio says, laughing. This has now changed. The natives recognized him as a kind of citizen of the world. With his work on this production, he intends to create spaces of silence through dance. “The dancers exist between the notes,” he says, likening them to a tree which is firmly rooted, but always turns towards the light with its leaves. In his opinion, dance should contribute to healing wounds – and in this context, the final ballet plays a major role.

Peter Sellars explains that Mozart cut several arias for the first performance of his opera. “And we also decided to be very selective. Our motto is ‘less is more’, in order to create more coherence,” the director explains. He is aware that this is a delicate issue in Salzburg, yet they have cut almost all the secco recitatives. “The nature of 18th-century recitatives is to convey and explain emotions,” conductor Teodor Currentzis says. “I believe that from today’s perspective, Mozart himself would have done away with them. At the time, he had to

compromise, so he wrote them,” he adds. Today, he no longer considers it necessary to explain everything with a sledge hammer. The audience is able to understand everything as it is.”

Press Office of the Salzburg Festival/Anne Zeuner

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<https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/presse/fotoservice>

The podcast can be found at:

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Idomeneo

Drama per musica in three acts K. 366 (1781)

Libretto by Giambattista Varesco

based on Antoine Danchet's text of the Tragédie en musique *Idoménée* by André

Campra

New production

Premiere: 27 July 2019

Further performances: 2, 6, 9, 12, 15, 19 August 2019

Felsenreitschule

Teodor Currentzis Conductor

Peter Sellars Director

George Tsybin Stage Sets

Robby Duiveman Costumes

James F. Ingalls Lighting

Lemi Ponifasio Choreography

Antonio Cuenca Ruiz Dramaturge

Russell Thomas Idomeneo

Paula Murríhy Idamante

Ying Fang Ilia

Nicole Chevalier Elettra

Levy Sekgapane Arbace

Issachah Savage Gran Sacerdote

Jonathan Lemalu Nettuno / La voce

Brittne Mahealani Fuimaono, Arikítai Tentau Dancers

musicAeterna Choir of Perm Opera

Vitaly Polonsky Chorus Master

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra

Kind regards,

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