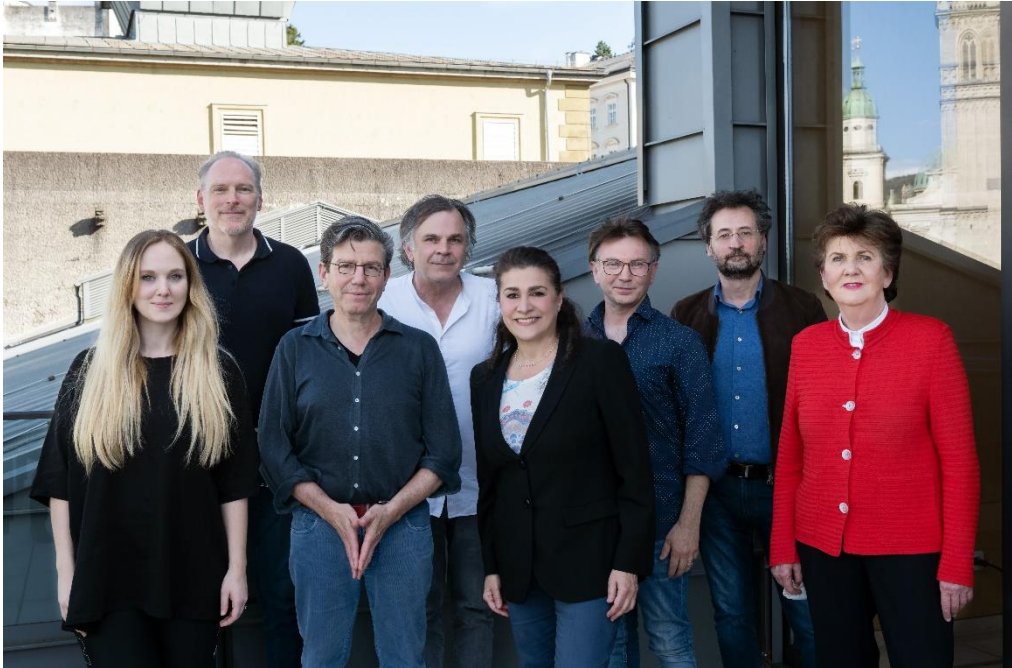


## Press Text: Rehearsals for *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*



From left to right: Mélissa Petit, Charles Workman, Robert Carsen, Markus Hinterhäuser, Cecilia Bartoli, Gideon Davey, Gianluca Capuano and Helga Rabl-Stadler. Photo: SF/Monika Rittershaus

(SF, 11 May 2021) A “thank you” from director Robert Carsen interrupts Gianluca Capuano’s conducting, and the piano in the orchestra pit falls silent. In a mixture of English and Italian, he explains to the four singers how he would like to change their sequence of movements, and the scene begins from the top. “This is a historical moment, the fact that we are back on stage and allowed to perform,” says Cecilia Bartoli, the artistic director of the Salzburg Whitsun Festival. During a rehearsal with the director last night, the Festival artists gave a glimpse of their intense work on George Frideric Handel’s oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, which premieres on 21 May and launches the Whitsun Festival.

*Trionfo* is one of Handel’s masterworks, said Cecilia Bartoli, explaining that it has been a long-held dream of hers for Robert Carsen to stage the oratorio. Handel is also one of his favourite composers, Carsen adds: “We could not have hit the nerve of these times better than with this piece.” To him, it is about beauty, time, pleasure, but also about re-evaluating one’s own life, which the pandemic has forced all of us to do. In his concept, the allegorical figure of Bellezza, sung by Mélissa Petit, is a young woman everyone in the audience can identify with. “A female Everyman figure,” as Festival President Helga Rabl-Stadler, the conversation’s moderator, summarized. On her path through time, Bellezza is not only tempted repeatedly by the diabolic figure of Piacere (Pleasure), despite Tempo (Time) and Disinganno (Disappointment) trying to help her every time, but ultimately she must find the right way herself, drawing upon her inner resources. “Life is a strange game. There is no rulebook. We have to write it all ourselves,” Robert Carsen says. “And what we do not want in it is regret.” Piacere was originally conceived as a male role. In this production, however, Cecilia Bartoli takes on the role of the seducer. “She embodies the devil, and the devil always has the most fun in life,” the director explains. Over and over, she tries to influence Bellezza with a *carpe diem* mentality. Live now, never mind the consequences, thus her creed. Drugs, alcohol, sex, opera – all these make people

perceive time differently. This state, however, does not last if you overdo it. Only in her last aria does Piacere show her true face, admitting that she has not been honest and sincere.

Gianluca Capuano is conducting in Salzburg for the third time (after *Ariodante* in 2017 and *Alcina* in 2019). Musically, he treats the oratorio as he would an opera, using, for example, an opulent continuo section. He is fascinated by the fact that at such a young age, Handel was inspired by such a range of styles, including the German one, and by his portrayal of characters. Mélissa Petit, here in her Festival debut, considers the part a great challenge. She is on stage throughout the entire piece, singing ten arias. Charles Workman, who has taken on the role of Tempo, has a long and successful Festival history. The first time he appeared here was in 1999 in Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Boréades*, another baroque opera. He described his exhilaration at finally being able to sing for an audience again, performing this wonderful music. Gideon Davey, who is responsible for sets and costumes, revealed that the audience may look forward to a great variety of costumes. Both on stage and in the pre-recorded film segments, there will be much to discover ...

Press Office of the Salzburg Festival/Anne Zeuner

Photographs are available here:

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

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