

**Italian soprano Carmen Giannattasio returns to Covent Garden as *Nedda* in the Royal Opera House's new production of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci***



Royal Opera House, Covent Garden  
3, 7, 10\*, 13, 15, 18, 21 December 2015 & 1 January 2016  
\*Live cinema relay

Aleksandrs Antonenko, *Canio*  
Carmen Giannattasio, *Nedda*  
Dimitri Platanias, *Tonio*  
Benjamin Hulett, *Beppo*  
Dionysios Sourbis, *Silvio*

Sir Antonio Pappano, *conductor* | Damiano Michieletto, *director*  
Paolo Fantin, *set designer* | Carla Teti, *costume designer*  
Alessandro Carletti, *lighting designer*

***“Magnani-like passion... She is the most talented of the younger Italian sopranos.”*** Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph

Italian soprano Carmen Giannattasio returns to the Royal Opera House to make her role debut as Nedda in Damiano Michieletto's new production of Leoncavallo's iconic opera *Pagliacci* opening on 3 December 2015 conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano. The all-Italian production team directed by Damiano Michieletto with set designer Paola Fantin and costume designer Carla Teti (who are about to make their debuts at the Royal Opera House in June with Rossini's final masterpiece *Guillaume Tell*) set the opera in contemporary Southern Italy. Following her fiery performance as Queen Elisabeth I in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* last year alongside Joyce DiDonato, this will be Giannattasio's third production at Covent Garden.

Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, considered one of the masterpieces of the Italian “verismo” is a short Italian melodrama, often coupled with Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* as on this occasion. Since its premiere at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan 1892, several legendary singers have made this opera their own, including: Maria Callas, Montserrat Caballé and Teresa Stratas in the role of Nedda and Enrico Caruso, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti in the role of Canio. The tragic clown's

famous aria “*Vesti la giubba e la faccia infarina*” (“**dress up jacket and powder your face**”) has become a favourite with tenors from Caruso to Pavarotti and most recently Fabio Armiliato in Woody Allen’s film *To Rome with Love*. It is a theme that all performers relate to with the pressures of travelling and delivering night after night, to make the show go on. As Giannattasio explains: “**once on stage I leave my private life, my pains, my troubles to offer beauty, art and give it my best**”.

The libretto written by Leoncavallo himself follows the adventures of a travelling theatre troupe staging plays in the South of Italy in the tradition of La Commedia dell’ Arte. It shows the misery of the beautiful actress Nedda in her marriage to the much older Canio and her love on and off the stage for her co-star Silvio with whom she plans to run away. Leoncavallo’s masterpiece presents the relationships of the unhappy lovers and travelling comedians in their most vivid manifestation with the impassioned score depicting the passion, lust, jealousy, desperation and cries for revenge.

Giannattasio shares the same “*sangue napoletano*” and the fiery temperament that ran through the veins of Leoncavallo. Her cinematic presence on stage has been compared to the volcanic Southern Italian actress **Anna Magnani** by the Telegraph.

In April 2012 Carmen Giannattasio stepped in at eleventh hour to make her debut at **Royal Opera House, Covent Garden** as *Mimi* in John Copley’s production of Puccini’s *La Boheme* to critical acclaim. In July 2014 the singer returned to star alongside leading mezzosoprano **Joyce DiDonato** in the production of *Maria Stuarda* by **Patrice Caurier** and **Moshe Leiser**. Giannattasio returns to the Elizabethan role while making her debut at the stage of the **Théâtre des Champs-Élysées** in Paris this June.

**“Giannattasio [...] is more seasoned Donizetti stylist and have the advantage of singing in the original Italian and she really capitalises on the use of her native tongue.”**

Hugh Cunning, The Sunday Times

In February, the Italian prima donna performed her first *Norma*, for the first performance of Bellini in the Middle East at the **Al Bustan Festival** in Beirut. Highlights of the upcoming 15-16 season include *Il Trovatore* (Leonora) at the Dutch National Opera in its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season in October 2015 and Carmen will appear as *Nedda* again at the Deutsche Oper in March 2016.

Carmen is dressed by couturier **Antonio Riva** and acts as an ambassador for jeweler **Bulgari** and the facial products of the Italian brand **Carthusia**.

## Pagliacci

Pagliacci premiered in Milan on 21 May 1892, but since its representation at New York Met in 1893 has been usually represented together with its life long companion, Mascagni’s masterpiece *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890).

It is considered the triumph of Italian musical verismo, which is about regular people far away from crowned heads and other royal entanglements. It aims to involve the spectators in this intense and sometimes overwhelming vortex of feelings and passions, so powerful because it mirrors the truth of life. Leoncavallo claimed in fact that the story was inspired by a real murder in his childhood village in South of Italy.

Canio interprets *Pagliacci* on their travelling show (the show in the show), while Nedda stars as *Colombina*.

Canio's sung prologue contains the credo of the musical verismo: "We are people of flesh and blood, and we breathe, exactly the way you do, the breath of this lost world." The fight between reality and stage comes to a tragic epilogue almost celebrating the indisputable force of the truth (*verita'*) over the fabrication of stage.

## Carmen Giannattasio

Carmen Giannattasio lustrous soprano voice is in high demand at all the leading opera houses across the world from the Metropolitan to the Royal Opera House and La Scala. After winning the First Prize and the Audience Award at Placido Domingo's Operalia, Paris 2002, her dramatic ability quickly thrust her onto the world stage and gained her immediate critical attention and a reputation as a chameleon, who could transform herself and delve convincingly into the grand passions of the tragic operatic heroines. Carmen boasts an impressive repertoire encompassing the great composers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and has appeared in the major European and American opera houses and concert venues under the world's leading conductors and directors.



Following her **Covent Garden's** debut in 2012, she performed for the first time at the **Metropolitan Opera in New York** as Leonora in David McVicar's production of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in September of the same year. In December 2013, Giannattasio opened the season at **San Carlo** with a mesmeric performance of Violetta in *La Traviata* directed by film-maker Ferzan Özpetek, followed by Mrs Alice in Verdi's *Falstaff* at La Scala, Verdi's *la Traviata* at **Hong Kong Arts Festival**, Leonora in Philipp Stolzl's new production of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* at **Wien Festwochen**, Desdemona in Josè Cura new production of Verdi's *Otello* at **Teatro Colon** of Buenos Aires, Alice in a Blakeley's new production of *Falstaff* at **Los Angeles Opera** conducted by James Conlon. In 2014 season appeared in the New Year's Concert from **La Fenice** broadcasted worldwide, Verdi's *Requiem* in **Valencia Palau de las Artes**, *Turandot* (Liu') at **Teatro Regio** of Turin conducted by P. Steinberg and at **Arena of Verona**, *La Bohème* (Mimi) and *Il Trovatore* at Teatro La Fenice in Venice. The eclectic soprano appeared also in *Maria Stuarda* (Elisabetta) at **Berlin Deutsche Oper** in concert version and on stage in a new production by Moshe Leiser at **Royal Opera House** in London with critical acclaim by press and audience, and in *Simon Boccanegra* (Amelia) at Teatro alla Scala of Milan, which was very welcome.

Her recent schedule included: a previous collaboration with **Damiano Michieletto** for his production of Rossini's *Il Viaggio a Reims* (Madama Cortese), followed by her debut in the title role of Bellini's *Norma*, presented for the first time in the Middle-east as an highlight of the **Al Bustan Festival** in Beirut. Remarkable her interpretations as Mimi in Götz Friederich's production of *La Bohème* at the Deutsche Oper and her performance as Liú in Puccini's *Turandot* at San Carlo in March 2015.

The 2015 season the glamorous prima donna will continue with the performances of *Norma* in the title role in Beijing, with her French debut at the **Théâtre des Champs-Élysées** as Elisabetta in *Maria Stuarda* production by Moshe Leiser and Patrice Courier. In July Giannattasio will take part to the *Carmen Gala* at the Arena of Verona as Micaela under the baton of Omer Meir Wellber. This autumn, she will return at the Dutch National Opera as Leonora in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and she will participate to **The Grand Opera Gala** in support of AIDS Foundation in Berlin, TV Broadcasted. Further future engagements include *Norma* at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, *Otello* at Barcelona, new Verdi productions of *Attila* at Opera Monte-Carlo and *Macbeth* at Theater an der Wien, a recital at Wigmore Hall. Carmen Giannattasio will also make her debut at the Sydney Opera House in 2016 on tour with La Scala for *Simon Boccanegra*.

### **Carmen Giannattasio's upcoming performances**

18, 20, 23, 25 & 27 June 2015

**Theatre des Champs Elysees, Paris**

***Maria Stuarda* - Donizetti**

Conductor - **Daniele Callegari**

Directors - **Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier**

Cast - **Carmen Giannattasio (Elisabetta)**, Aleksandra Kurzak, Francesco Demuro, Carlo Colombara, Christian Helmer, Sophie Pondjiclis

24 July 2015

**Arena, Verona**

**Carmen Gala Concert**

Conductor - **Omer Meir Wellber**

Cast - **Carmen Giannattasio**, Vittorio Grigolo, Anita Rachvelishvili, Dalibor Jenis

8, 11, 14, 19, 22, 25, 28 October and 1 November 2015

**Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam**

***Il Trovatore* - Verdi**

Conductor - **Maurizio Benini**

Director - **Àlex Ollé (La Fura dels Baus)**

Cast - **Carmen Giannattasio (Leonora)**, Ekaterina Gubanova, Francesco Meli, Roberto Tagliavini, Florieke Beelen, Antonio Lozano, Peter Arink, Richard Prada

7 November 2015

**Deutsche Oper, Berlin**

Opera Gala Concert in support of the German AIDS Foundation

3, 7, 10\*, 13, 15, 18 and 21 December 2015, 1 January 2016

\* Live cinema relay

**Royal Opera House, Covent Garden**

***Pagliacci* - Leoncavallo**

Conductor - **Sir Antonio Pappano**

Director - **Damiano Michieletto**

Cast - **Carmen Giannattasio (Nedda)**, Aleksandrs Antonenko (Canio), Dimitri Platanius, Benjamin Hulett, Dionysios Sourbis

28 and 31 December 2015

**Deutsche Oper, Berlin**

**La Bohème - Puccini**

Conductor - **William Spaulding**

Director - **Götz Friedrich**

Cast - **Carmen Giannattasio (Mimi)**, Giorgio Berrugi, Simon Pauly, Davide Luciano,  
Dong-Hwan Lee, Jörg Schörner, Elena Tsallagova, Attilio Glaser, Peter Maus, Michael  
Adams, Thomas Lehman

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