

Christophe Rousset revisits Mozart's early opera *Mitridate* in a new production at La Monnaie



MITRIDATE

La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra
Christophe Rousset *conductor*

Jean-Philippe Clarac & Olivier Deloeuil *staging and costumes*

5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19 May
La Monnaie, Brussels, Belgium

Christophe Rousset revisits Mozart's early opera *Mitridate* in a new production by Jean-Philippe Clarac and Olivier Deloeuil at La Monnaie, 18 years after his recording with a stellar cast including Cecilia Bartoli, Natalie Dessay and Brian Asawa. This recording followed on from the success of Rousset's soundtrack to the film *Farinelli*, which sold more than a million discs worldwide. The artistic duo Clarac and Deloeuil from Bordeaux won La Monnaie's competition to stage *Mitridate* with the idea of setting the opera at a EU summit in the Belgian capital. From the podium, Rousset leads an outstanding cast including **Michael Spyres** in the title role, **Lenneke Ruiten**, **Myrtò Papatnasiu**, **David Hansen**, **Simona Šaturová**, **Sergey Romanovsky** and **Yves Saelens**.

The artistic team chose to set *Mitridate* in a hastily organized EU summit amidst a crisis, to discuss measures due to the sudden death of one of the leaders of Pontus. The summit doesn't only expose the issues of the EU but also exposes the state of society itself. Clarac and Deloeuil explore the theme of war and resistance in the context of love that drives a father and son apart.

Mitridate was composed in 1770 when Mozart was not quite 15. It was commissioned for the main event of the carnival season at the Milan opera house, which shortly after that became La Scala. The Teatro Ducale had commissioned many distinguished composers before Mozart including Gluck, Galuppi, Puccini, Traetta and Hasse. This was Mozart's first attempt at Opera Seria, something he had, until this point, only dreamt of doing. With a mostly Italian cast for the premiere, Mozart was guided by Italian tastes and by what the Milanese public wanted to hear, despite some turbulent scenes in the lead up to the premiere with the title role sung by Guglielmo D'Ettoire. The opera ran for 20 performances and was therefore considered a success. Mozart's father wrote "God be praised that the first performance met with unanimous praise." The prima donna Antonia Bernasconi's aria in the role of Aspasia was even encored.

Hugh Canning in Sunday Times wrote of Rousset's recording in 1999:



"Mitridate may be no masterpiece...but given fabulous vocal technicians and a conductor who encourages his singers to deliver the secco recitatives as vitally alive theatrical exchanges, then it can work spectacularly well."

Mitridate, Re di Ponto 5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17 & 19 May

Christophe Rousset *music direction*
La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra
Michael Spyres *Mitridate*
Lenneke Ruiten *Aspasia*
Myrtò Papatnasiu *Sifare*
David Hansen *Farnace*
Simona Šaturová *Ismene*
Sergey Romanovsky *Marzio*
Yves Saelens *Arbate*

Jean-Philippe Clarac & Olivier Deloeuil *staging and costumes*
Rick Martin *set design and lighting*
Jean-Baptiste Beïs *video*
Lodie Kardouss *artistic collaboration*

Streaming Mitridate, Re di Ponto is online available on MMChannel from 24 May to 13 June 2016

Christophe Rousset Harpichordist, Conductor and Musicologist



Founder of the period instrument ensemble Les Talens Lyriques, Christophe Rousset is an inspirational musician and conductor specialising in the baroque and classical repertoire. Particularly inspired by European music of the 17th and 18th centuries, Rousset has rediscovered forgotten operas such as *Antigona* by Traetta, *La Capricciosa Corretta* by Martín y Soler, *Armida Abbandonata* by Jommelli, *La Grotta di Trofonio* by Salieri and *Temistocle* by Jean-Christien Bach.

His many recordings include the complete harpsichord works of François Couperin, Jean-Philippe Rameau, d'Anglebert and Forqueray, and his interpretations of works by J. S. Bach (*Partitas, Goldberg Variations, Harpsichord Concertos, English Suites, French Suites, Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann*) are regarded as references. With his ensemble Les Talens Lyriques, his great successes on disc include Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, Mozart's *Mitridate*,

Overtures by Rameau, *Persée*, *Roland* and *Bellérophon* by Lully. Christophe Rousset has received honorary awards from the French government for his pioneering efforts work in classical music.

Les Talens Lyriques



The vocal and instrumental ensemble Les Talens Lyriques was founded in 1991 by Christophe Rousset. By choosing the name, the conductor attested to his passionate interest in an 18th century music repertoire which he has fortunately begun to re-introduce to the public. Rousset, however, has in no way neglected composers of the previous century.

The repertoire ranges from Monteverdi (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) to Handel (*Scipione*, *Riccardo Primo*, *Rinaldo*, *Admeto*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Serse*, *Tamerlano*, *Alcina*, *Ariodante*), Lully (*Persée*, *Roland*, *Bellérophon*), Cimarosa (*Il Mercato di Malmantile*, *Il Matrimonio Segreto*), Traetta (*Antigona*, *Ippolito ed Aricia*), Jommelli (*Armida abbandonata*), Martin y Soler (*La Capricciosa Corretta*) and even Mozart (*Mitridate*, *Re di Ponto*).

Les Talens Lyriques has recorded for DECCA (Universal Music), Naïve, Ambrosie, Aparté and Virgin Classics. In 1994, the ensemble has realised the original soundtrack of the film *Farinelli il Castrato*. In 2001, it won the Classical Music Victory.

Les Talens Lyriques are supported by the **Ministry of Culture and Communication** and the **City of Paris**. In addition, the ensemble is grateful for the generous support of the **Annenberg Foundation / GRoW - Gregory and Regina Annenberg Weingarten** and the **Friends of the Cercle des Mécènes**.

Future highlights

10-15 May
TOUR to New Zealand
Music in Versailles

5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19 May
La Monnaie, Brussels, Belgium
MOZART *Mitridate*
La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra
Christophe Rousset *conductor*
Jean-Philippe Clarac & Olivier Deloëuil
stage direction

14, 16, 19 & 21 June
Wiener Staatsoper, Vienna, Austria
GLUCK *Alceste*
Les Talens Lyriques
Gustav Mahler Choir
Christophe Rousset *conductor and harpsichord*
Christof Loy *stage director*
Véronique Gens, *Alceste*
Joseph Kaiser, *Admète*

Recent & forthcoming recordings

LULLY *Amadis*
CD Aparté September 2014

SALIERI *Les Danaïdes*
CD Palazzetto Bru Zane June 2015

RAMEAU *Les Indes galantes*
DVD Alpha Classics August 2015

RAMEAU *Zaïs*
CD Aparté September 2015

HANDEL *Alcina/Tamerlano*
DVD Outhere May 2016

LULLY *Armide*
CD Aparté October 2016

Farinelli Cantatas with Ann Hallenberg
CD Aparté October 2016



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