

Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques
unearth the impropriety of the Gods in a staging of
Legrenzi's *La Divisione del Mondo*



8-16 February
Strasbourg

1, 3 March
Mulhouse

9 March
Colmar

20-27 March
Nancy

Legrenzi La
Divisione del Mondo

13, 14 April
Versailles

"La Divisione del Mondo shows us a most complicated and modern dysfunctional family - the Roman Gods seem to offer a hilarious mirror of our human misconduct and failures."

- Jetske Mijnsen

Christophe Rousset and **Les Talens Lyriques** tour **Giovanni Legrenzi's** rarely-performed ***La Divisione del Mondo*** in France from **8 February** to **14 April**. Directed by **Jetske Mijnsen**, fifteen performances will be given from **Strasbourg** to **Versailles**, via **Mulhouse**, **Colmar**, and **Nancy**, in a co-production with the **Opéra national du Rhin** and the **Opéra national de Lorraine**.

Seen in its first modern staging in France, the revival of *La Divisione del Mondo* forms part of Les Talens Lyriques' season theme, ***The Temptation of Italy***, tracking Italian influences on French writing. Venetian opera had influenced French operatic tradition since its inception, and the only surviving score for *La Divisione del Mondo* is found in the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris.

First performed in a lavish staging with great success at the Venetian **Teatro San Salvador** in 1675, *La Divisione del Mondo* depicts the division of the world following the victory of the Olympian gods over the Titan deities: the world inhabited by Madeline Miller's novel *Circe*, recently a runaway best-seller in both the *New York Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

Far from being a banal tale of morals and virtues, instead it unearths dreadful impropriety, with the goddess Venus leading all the other gods (with the exception of Saturn) through a series of moral temptations into debauchery. A true Baroque soap opera, laying bare the petty squabbles of the Gods proved a huge hit, with thirteen productions mounted before the turn of the century.

"Venetian opera was intensely based on the idea of masquerade, celebration and revelry. There is a great deal of frivolity in *La Divisione del Mondo*: the ancient divinities are mocked in a comedy of manners, a bit like a soap opera."

- Christophe Rousset

The work's extravagance conformed closely with the concept of public opera in Venice providing a diversion for the population, a safety valve in a dangerous city, much as Elizabethan theatre or the operas of Lully kept the aristocracy out of mischief at Versailles.

With a libretto by **Giulio Cesare Corradi**, the opera was written just five years after the end of a real war, the Cretan war, which had lasted 24 years and which saw Crete conquered by the Ottoman Empire from the Republic of Venice.



With short and fast arias, the writing prefigures later developments from Scarlatti and Handel. A major operatic figure in Venice after Monteverdi and Cavalli, **Giovanni Legrenzi** (1626-1690) also held the prestigious post of *maestro di capella* at the Basilica di San Marco, and his operas were exceedingly popular in his lifetime. He was a prolific composer, producing around twenty operas in his lifetime, alongside sacred vocal music and instrumental works.

Legrenzi was in many ways the Venetian contemporary of Lully, whose 1674 *Alceste*, written just a year before *La Divisione del Mondo*, has recently been nominated for a Grammy in the recording by Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques.

Listings

Opéra national du Rhin

8, 12, 14, 16 February, 20:00
10 February, 15:00

Opéra, Strasbourg

1 March, 20:00

3 March, 15:00

Théâtre de la Sinne, Mulhouse

9 March, 20:00

Théâtre municipal, Colmar

Opéra national de Lorraine

20, 22, 26, 27 March, 20:00

24 March, 15:00

Opéra, Nancy

13 April, 19:00

14 April, 15:00

Opéra Royal, Versailles

Carlo Allemano Giove

Stuart Jackson Nettuno

Andre Morsch Plutone

Arnaud Richard Saturno

Julie Boulianne Giunone

Sophie Junker Venere

Jake Arditti Apollo

Christopher Lowrey Marte

Soraya Mafi Cintia

Rupert Enticknap Mercurio

Ada Elodie Turca Amore

Alberto Miguélez Rouco

Discordia

Jetske Mijnsen stage director

Christophe Rousset music

director

Les Talens Lyriques

Herbert Muraier set design

Julia Katharina Berndt

costumes

Bernd Purkrabek lighting

Les Talens Lyriques



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Cargocollective_Julien Vermeesch

The ensemble Les Talens Lyriques, which takes its name from the subtitle of Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera *Les Fêtes d'Hébé* (1739), was formed in 1991 by the harpsichordist and conductor Christophe Rousset.

Championing a broad vocal and instrumental repertoire, ranging from early Baroque to the beginnings of Romanticism, the musicians of Les Talens Lyriques aim to throw light on the great masterpieces of musical

history, while providing perspective by presenting rarer or little known works that are important as missing links in the European musical heritage. This musicological and editorial work, which contributes to its renown, is a priority for the ensemble.

Les Talens Lyriques perform to date works by Monteverdi (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, *L'Orfeo*), Cavalli (*La Didone*, *La Calisto*), Landi (*La Morte d'Orfeo*), Handel (*Scipione*, *Riccardo Primo*, *Rinaldo*, *Admeto*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Serse*, *Arianna in Creta*, *Tamerlano*, *Ariodante*, *Semele*, *Alcina*), Lully (*Persée*, *Roland*, *Bellérophon*, *Phaéton*, *Amadis*, *Armide*, *Alceste*), Desmarest (*Vénus et Adonis*), Mondonville (*Les*

Fêtes de Paphos), Cimarosa (*Il Mercato di Malmantile, Il Matrimonio segreto*), Traetta (*Antigona, Ippolito ed Aricia*), Jommelli (*Armida abbandonata*), Martin y Soler (*La Capricciosa corretta, Il Tutore burlato*), Mozart (*Mitridate, Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Così fan tutte, Die Zauberflöte*), Salieri (*La Grotta di Trofonio, Les Danaïdes, Les Horaces, Tarare*), Rameau (*Zoroastre, Castor et Pollux, Les Indes galantes, Platée, Pygmalion*), Gluck (*Bauci e Filemone, Alceste*), Beethoven, Cherubini (*Médée*), García (*Il Califfo di Bagdad*), Berlioz, Massenet, Gounod (*Faust*) and Saint-Saëns.

The re-creation of these works goes hand in hand with close collaboration with stage directors and choreographers such as Pierre Audi, Jean-Marie Villégier, David McVicar, Eric Vigner, Ludovic Lagarde, Mariame Clément, Jean-Pierre Vincent, Macha Makeïeff, Laura Scozzi, Natalie van Parys, Marcial di Fonzo Bo, Claus Guth, Robert Carsen, David Hermann, Christof Loy, Jetske Mijnsen, Alban Richard and David Lescot.

As well as opera, Les Talens Lyriques explore other musical genres: madrigal, cantata, air de cour, symphonies, and the vast corpus of sacred music (masses, motets, oratorios, *Leçons de Ténèbres*, and so on). In formations varying from a handful of musicians to more than sixty, representing every generation, they give performances all over the world.

In 2018-2019 Les Talens Lyriques return to their first love, with a season entitled "The Temptation of Italy". Vocality will be celebrated in works ranging from masterpieces by Monteverdi, Purcell, Handel (*Agrippina*) and Mozart (*La Betulia liberata*) to rarely heard or unpublished scores by Legrenzi (*La Divisione del mondo*), Salieri (*Tarare*), Leo and Porpora. After celebrating Telemann in 2017, the ensemble will be acting as François Couperin's representative abroad when they take his music to the American continent for the 350th anniversary of the composer's birth. "Couperin Year" will also be celebrated with recordings: *Les Nations* and the *Concerts Royaux* are to be released (in autumn and in December, respectively) on the Aparté label.

Les Talens Lyriques recorded the famous soundtrack for Gérard Corbiau's film *Farinelli* (1994), which sold over a million copies. The ensemble now has a discography comprising some sixty references, on various labels (Erato, Fnac Music, Auvidis, Decca, Naïve, Ambrosia, Virgin Classics, Outhere and Aparté). This season, it will conclude the cycle of French operas by Salieri with the release of *Les Horaces* in September 2018 (Aparté) and the recording of *Tarare* in the autumn (also for Aparté).

Since 2007 the musicians of the ensemble have been working to introduce schoolchildren to music, via a programme of ambitious artistic actions and innovative educational initiatives. They are in residence in schools in Paris and Île-de-France, where they have created a student orchestra with young secondary school pupils and a small choir ("Le petit chœur des Talens"). The three *t@lenschool* educational applications, downloadable free of charge, have met with much enthusiasm and have received several national and international awards.

The ensemble Les Talens Lyriques receives subsidies from the French Ministry of Culture and the City of Paris, and generous support from its Circle of Patrons. The ensemble wishes to thank its principal Patrons, the Annenberg Foundation / GRoW - Gregory and Regina Annenberg Weingarten, Mrs Aline Foriel-Destezet and Mécénat Musical Société Générale.

Since 2011 Les Talens Lyriques have been associate artists, in residence at the Singer-Polignac Foundation in Paris. Les Talens Lyriques are founding members of FEVIS (Federation of Specialised Vocal and Instrumental Ensembles) and of PROFEDIM (Professional Union of Music Producers, Festivals, Ensembles, and Independent Distributors).



www.lestalenslyriques.com

Christophe Rousset **Harpichordist, Conductor, Musicologist**



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The founder of the ensemble Les Talens Lyriques and internationally recognised harpsichordist Christophe Rousset is a musician and conductor inspired by a passion for opera and the rediscovery of the European musical heritage.

His studies (harpsichord) with Huguette Dreyfus at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, then with Bob van Asperen at the Royal Conservatory of

The Hague (winning the coveted First Prize in the Seventh Bruges International Harpsichord Competition at the age of twenty-two), followed by the creation of his own ensemble, Les Talens Lyriques, in 1991, have enabled Christophe Rousset to obtain a perfect grasp of the richness and diversity of the Baroque, Classical and pre-Romantic repertoires.

Christophe Rousset is now invited to appear with Les Talens Lyriques all over Europe (Opéra National de Paris, Opéra Comique, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Philharmonie de Paris, Opéra Royal de Versailles, Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Lausanne Opéra, Teatro Real Madrid, Vienna Staatsoper and Theater an der Wien, Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie and Bozar in Brussels, London's Wigmore Hall and Barbican Centre, and so on), as well as on tour in other parts of the world (Mexico, New Zealand, Canada, United States, etc.).

At the same time he continues to pursue an active career as a harpsichordist and chamber musician, playing and recording on some of the world's finest period instruments. His recordings of the harpsichord works of Louis and François Couperin, Rameau, D'Anglebert, Royer, Duphy, Forqueray, Balbastre and Scarlatti, and those devoted to J. S. Bach (Partitas, Goldberg Variations, Harpsichord Concertos, English Suites, French Suites, *Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann*, Well-Tempered Clavier) are regarded as references.

Teaching is of paramount importance to Christophe Rousset, who organises and gives many master-classes and academies (Paris Conservatoire CNSM, Ambronay, Fondation Royaumont, Operastudio Vlaanderen-Ghent, OFJ Baroque, Junge Deutsche Philharmonie-Berlin, Accademia Chigiana-Siena, Amici della Musica in Florence, Britten-Pears Orchestra at Snape Maltings) and, together with members of Les Talens Lyriques, plays an active part in introducing young secondary school students in Paris and the Île-de-France to music.

Christophe Rousset also appears regularly as a guest conductor: Liceu Barcelona, San Carlo Naples, La Scala Milan, Opéra Royal de Wallonie, London's Royal Opera House, Orquesta Nacional de España, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orchestre du Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, etc.

He is active too in the field of research and writing, through critical editions, the publication of monographs devoted to Jean-Philippe Rameau and François Couperin (Actes Sud, 2007 and 2016, respectively).

2017 saw the publication of a series of interviews by Camille de Rijck in which Christophe Rousset shares his thoughts on music: *L'impression que l'instrument chante*, Éditions de la Cité de la Musique - Philharmonie de Paris (La rue musicale - Entretiens).

Christophe Rousset is a Knight of the French Legion of Honour, a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters, and a Knight of the National Order of Merit.

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