

Saison 2020/21

## Preview

Berlin, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Ladies, gentlemen, colleagues,

Four of our seven new main-stage productions are works by German composers and have undoubtedly informed our idea of what German-ness is.

The German focus is attributable to the RING OF THE NIBELUNG, two of whose sections, **THE VALKYRIE** and **SIEGFRIED**, have their **premieres** (on **27<sup>th</sup> September** and **24<sup>th</sup> January**) as part of **Stefan Herheim's** new production featuring the conducting of **General Music Director Donald Runnicles**. We saw this new version of the RING, however, as an occasion to tackle two other works by great German composers: Johann Sebastian Bach's **ST MATTHEW PASSION** (**25<sup>th</sup> April**) and Ludwig van Beethoven's **FIDELIO** (**12<sup>th</sup> June**).

And for all the differences between the RING, FIDELIO and the ST MATTHEW PASSION, all three dramatic masterpieces have one thing in common: they are not simply out to entertain the audience; their authors were convinced that one function of art is to spark debate and communicate ideas. As such, the RING, FIDELIO and the ST MATTHEW PASSION have always been considered more than just theatrical works. Just as Wagner created a new type of theatre experience to reflect his artistic vision, so FIDELIO is a mix of opera and oratorio and the ST MATTHEW PASSION is at pains to dissolve the boundary between producers and public, between composers and congregation – in church as in the concert hall and onstage.

We are delighted to have secured the services of **Lise Davidsen** as Sieglinde and **Nina Stemme** as Brünnhilde, two of the top international Wagner sopranos. For more details on the cast of the **RING**, please consult the 2020/21 season brochure or the website.

Considered an archetypical work of Protestant music, Bach's **ST MATTHEW PASSION**, which brings Christ's suffering to life in theatre form, has always moved producers to render the work onstage. The new production at the Deutsche Oper Berlin is being crafted by **Benedikt von Peter**, whose spatial concept is a close reflection of Bach's idea of blending audience with musical action. Von Peter is especially interested in identifying the significance of the Passion concept for a heterogeneous society in which Christianity as a religion is losing ground. We have found a conductor, **Alessandro de Marchi**, who is prepared to aim for a synthesis between past methods of mounting the piece and the demands of a modern auditorium.

Beethoven's **FIDELIO** opera was the piece that the forerunner of the Deutsche Oper Berlin chose as its inaugural work in 1912, and the opera is now a fixture in the repertoire of the house. Since his production of Lachenmann's **DAS MÄDCHEN MIT DEN SCHWEFELHÖLERN** director **David Hermann** has been a regular guest in the Bismarckstraße and is now being assisted by set designer **Johannes Schütz**. The part of Florestan is sung by **Brian Jagde**, with **Ingela Brimberg** taking the role of Leonore. **Donald Runnicles** takes the conductor's stand for both the premiere of **FIDELIO** and the concertante performance of the first version of **LEONORE**, which will be presented on **15<sup>th</sup> September** as part of Musikfest Berlin.

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We also present three other brand-new productions on the main stage: **Marina Abramović's 7 DEATHS OF MARIA CALLAS**, an international co-production, opens the season on **19<sup>th</sup> August**. One of the leading artists of our age, Abramović uses Callas's body of work to explore the existential question of how personal crises and disappointments can generate art and even confer on an artwork its unique intensity. This very special work centres on seven of the deaths that Maria Callas depicted onstage. Composer **Marko Nikodijević** is Composer in Residence at the RSB this season.

**SIMON BOCCANEGRA** (premiere on **22<sup>nd</sup> November**) is one of Verdi's most political operas, one that portrays a society that has been formed and informed by decades of political dogfighting and alliance building and in which all wielders of power sooner or later revert to type and start acting not out of conviction but out of a premeditated interest in holding on to power. The young Russian director **Vasily Barkathov** returns with this new production, having already triumphed with his world premiere of Aribert Reimann's **L'INVISIBLE**, a production that we will be reprising to mark Aribert Reimann's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday in **March 2021**.

Another date for the diaries is **14<sup>th</sup> March**, when we will be staging a masterpiece from the late Puccini era, a work that is well worth resurrecting, in our estimation: **Riccardo Zandonai's FRANCESCA DA RIMINI**, which premiered in 1914. **Christof Loy**, memories of whose production of Korngold's **DAS WUNDER DER HELIANE** are still fresh, expressed a special desire to mount the piece (**HELIANE** is another work being reprised on **9<sup>th</sup> May**). As with **HELIANE**, the music in **FRANCESCA** is sensuous, rapturous and full of colour and finds a perfect setting in Loy's severe and formalist framework. In **FRANCESCA**, as in **HELIANE**, Christof Loy finds a rebellious, uncontrollable woman who brings the structures in which she lives crashing down around her. **Sara Jakubiak** takes on the role of Francesca, a character cut from the same cloth as Heliane. She can also be seen singing Venus/Elisabeth in **TANNHÄUSER** in the upcoming season.

The **Tischlerei**, our **space for experimental musical theatre**, serves as a venue for crossover works, collaborations with independent artists and troupes from Berlin and abroad, and coproductions with other theatres, colleges and festivals. The world premiere of **ONCE TO BE REALISED. SIX ENCOUNTERS WITH JANI CRISTOUS "PROJECT FILES"**, scheduled for the tail end of this season (**5<sup>th</sup> June 2020**), is a joint production with the Munich Biennale and the Onassis Cultural Center in Athens.

For **Gesine Danckwart's THE MAKING OF BLOND** (on **5th March**) we are teaming up with the Burgtheater Wien, and for **NEUE SZENEN V: 3 SCHEITERHAUFEN** (on **30th April**) we will be collaborating for the fifth time with the Hanns Eisler School of Music Berlin as three premieres are put together by three young composers, who were selected in the first phase of the competition.

Early in the 2020/21 season, theatre and opera director **Anna-Sophie Mahler** presents an evening entitled **WALDESRUH (1st October)**, a work that incorporates romantic choral music and *lieder* and specialised research done by woodland experts. Morton Feldman's "Triadic Memories" for Solo Piano rounds off the evening.

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Details on individual productions and our numerous options for children and teenagers are available from the attached texts.

As set out in the season brochure, **Plácido Domingo** was due to appear as the Marquis of Posa in performances of DON CARLO in June 2021. In light of recent press reports, we are looking for ways to withdraw from the contract. We will notify patrons as soon as the role has been recast.

Thank you for your interest!



Kirsten Hehmeyer  
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