

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN OPERA TRUST LIMITED - Charity No. 1168484

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JACKSONS LANE THEATRE, HIGHGATE, LONDON N6 5AA



L'incoronazione di Poppea

by Claudio Monteverdi

Libretto by Giovanni Francesco Busenello

May 12th to 21st, 2017

Stage Director: Simon Iorio • Music Director: Oliver John Ruthven • With Musica Poetica

May 12th to 21st, at Jacksons Lane Theatre in Highgate, Hampstead Garden Opera will present Monteverdi's great masterpiece, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, in an innovative new production developed by Simon Iorio. For HGO, performing this wonderful work is a very important milestone, particularly given that we coincide with the 450th anniversary of Monteverdi's birth on the 21st May. This production also marks the first time that HGO will perform an opera in its original language (other than English), together with the first time that we will perform with surtitles. This is an indication of our pledge as a training opera company to give our singers a complete experience of performing opera, as well as giving our audiences a presentation of this work with not only the authentic music, but also the authentic text.

Claudio Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, the third of his three surviving operas, rightly occupies an elevated position in the history of the genre. It is a masterpiece of text setting and musical invention, at a time when opera as we know it today was very new, and certainly not performed in anything like the same way. Monteverdi was blessed to be able to set a particularly fine libretto, written Giovanni Busenello, perhaps the first great opera librettist, and Da Ponte's literary forefather.

"The opera is a story about loss of all reason in a quest for power" says Director Simon Iorio. "Our characters exist in a world of lust and intrigue. Poppea is a woman who is completely aware of her own superficial beauty and sexual appeal, knowing exactly how to harness it in order to achieve her own ambitions of power and success. She focuses her attention on the young Nerone, an impetuous, vicious, spoiled and indulgent man. The pair make for a deadly combination to all who surround them. Our moral compass is Seneca, a philosopher and advisor to Nerone, desperately trying to live up to his ideals and beliefs whilst being utterly compromised."

"What I love about Monteverdi is his dedication to the text, and how the music is there to illuminate the beauty of this masterful 17th Century Italian poetry. As a director it has been a joy to work on this piece as the music provides the impulses for all of the action. For me, the piece is like a mosaic. It doesn't necessary run in a straight line, it has many colours and facets much like the human soul."

HGO will be joined by an array of period instruments for *Poppea*; two harpsichords, chamber organ, two theorbos, viola da gamba, violone and violins. "This promises to be a vibrant and exciting production of one of the greatest works of art of the seventeenth century, and one not to be missed." Says Music Director Oliver John Ruthven.

Simon Iorio trained as a singer before moving into directing seven years ago. He regularly works as an assistant Glyndebourne and The Royal Opera House and has directed at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, The Royal Academy of Music, and The Battle Festival in collaboration with Glyndebourne Education. He also works as a professor of Stage Craft at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and coaches the Jerwood Young Artist's at Glyndebourne.

Oliver John Ruthven, Principal Music Director of Hampstead Garden Opera, is a conductor, harpsichordist and singer who has worked with companies such as The Royal Ballet, The Monteverdi Choir, and the Hallé Youth Choir, and is a member of the English Baroque Soloists. He has led the company since 2008 in an exciting and diverse range of repertoire spanning over 400 years, from Monteverdi's L'Orfeo (1609) to Jonathan Dove's Mansfield Park (2011). In 2016, he was Head of Music Staff for English Touring Opera's Autumn season, a position he will return to in Autumn 2017.

Hampstead Garden Opera, in being since 1990, is a company committed to the development of young singers, and stages two productions each year. Its consistently high musical, vocal and productions standards make HGO an important part of the artistic life of north London.



Hampstead Garden Opera won the Off West End (Offies) Opera Production Award 2013 for its 2012 staging of *Così fan tutte*, and were finalists for the same award in the 2014, 2015, and 2016 Offies.

"What do you go to the opera for? The question has a thousand answers, but if you're going to Mozart's Marriage of Figaro, the chances are that you're expecting some frothy romantic comedy, some elegant music and a bunch of tunes that will stay in your head when the show is over. But on a good day, it can be so much more than that, and Bruno Ravella's production for Hampstead Garden Opera pulls out all the stops.." David Karlin's review of 'The Marriage of Figaro for **Bachtrack**.

Performances of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*:

Evenings at 7.30 pm – May 12, 13, & 16-20

Matinées at 4.00pm – Sundays May 14 & 21

Matinée at 2.30pm – Saturday May 20

Jacksons Lane Theatre, Highgate, London N6 5AA

Tickets: (unreserved) £27 (Premium Seats) £22 (General Admission) (Concessions £20 – May 12, 13)

Box Office: 0800 411 8881

Online: www.hgo.org.uk/tickets

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21st March 2017