



# Handel Agrippina

**concert performance**

Friday 31 May 2019 6.30pm, Hall

**Il Pomod'Oro**

**Maxim Emelyanychev** director/harpsichord

**Joyce DiDonato** Agrippina

**Elsa Benoit** Poppea

**Xavier Sabata** Ottone

**Franco Fagioli** Nerone

**Luca Pisaroni** Claudio

**Andrea Mastroni** Pallante

**Carlo Vistoli** Narciso

**Biagio Pizzuti** Lesbo

There will be one interval of 25 minutes following the Act 2 scene 5 aria 'Voi ch'udite il mio lamento'

*Unfortunately Kathryn Lewek (Poppea), Marie-Nicole Lemieux (Ottone) and Jakub Józef Orliński (Narciso) have had to withdraw from this performance. We are grateful to Elsa Benoit, Xavier Sabata and Carlo Vistoli for taking their places at short notice*

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# Welcome

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A warm welcome to tonight's concert performance of Handel's early masterpiece *Agrippina*. It marks the third of four performances given this season by Il Pomo d'Oro, with the players returning tomorrow for a programme of Baroque cello music with Edgar Moreau.

This Italian period-instrument ensemble made an indelible impression on its Barbican debut in 2015 led by its inspirational young director Maxim Emelyanychev. Their joint reputation was then cemented by their thrilling reading of *Serse* earlier this season.

For *Agrippina* Handel took inspiration from the political machinations of Ancient Rome, with a tale combining power games and star-crossed lovers (though all comes right in the end). His central character, Agrippina, is the ultimate power-crazed woman, determined to promote her son Nero to the position of Emperor. Taking on the title-role is mezzo-soprano JoyceDiDonato, who is joined by an international cast of the highest quality.

It promises to be a captivating evening.  
I hope you enjoy it.

Huw Humphreys,  
Head of Music

# Agrippina: synopsis

## Act 1

We are in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius (Claudio). His wife Agrippina has a son, Nero (Nerone), from a previous marriage, whom she wants to see crowned as emperor. What seems a perfect opportunity to fulfil this ambition arrives with the news that Claudio has drowned in a shipwreck. Agrippina urges Nero to court popular favour by distributing gold to the Roman mob. Summoning Pallante and Narciso – freed slaves each of whom she knows to be in love with her – she persuades them to act as agents with the senate on Nero's behalf.

While Nero gives alms to the poor, Agrippina confronts the senate with the fact of Claudio's death, but as her son prepares to mount the throne, a fanfare of trumpets heralds the arrival of the emperor, very much alive, at the port of Antium. His faithful general Ottone enters to announce that as a recompense for saving Claudio's life, he has been named imperial successor. Asking for a private interview with Agrippina, Ottone reveals that he is in love with the beautiful Poppea and has no desire to become emperor. Agrippina, knowing Claudio himself fancies Poppea, sees a chance for further mischief. Assuring Ottone of her support she leaves him to enjoy his seeming good fortune.

At home Poppea receives Claudio's servant Lesbo, who tells her that his master plans a visit this very night. Agrippina, who has overheard this exchange, now seeks to persuade Poppea that Ottone is only using her to gain power and will soon yield her to Claudio. Poppea needs to make the emperor jealous and increase his passion. If, however, Claudio tries to force himself on her, Agrippina will be standing by to intervene. Everything goes as planned. Sickened and angry, Poppea welcomes Claudio and denounces Ottone to him. Lesbo arrives to interrupt an over-enthusiastic emperor with the news that Agrippina is on her way. Claudio hurries off, leaving Poppea to receive Agrippina's elaborately insincere assurances of friendship.

## Act 2

In a street outside the palace, Pallante and Narciso, aware of Agrippina's falsehood, agree to work against her. Ottone enters, full of doubts as to his appointment as Claudio's successor. Agrippina, Poppea and Nero arrive, followed by the emperor himself in a triumphal chariot. He is gracious towards everyone but Ottone, whom he accuses of treachery, saying death is his only just reward. The hapless general appeals first of all to Agrippina, who rebuffs him for his disloyalty, then to Poppea, who accuses him of discarding her for the imperial throne, and last of all to Nero, who mocks his sudden insecurity.

Alone in her garden, Poppea repents her cruelty, longing for Ottone to be innocent. When he appears, she pretends to be asleep and talks in a rambling fashion about what Agrippina told her. Ottone, appalled, gives her a dagger, telling her to kill him if she believes he is guilty. Poppea realises that Agrippina has lied to her and seeks revenge. An impending visit from Claudio, she perceives, can be turned to good account, as can the arrival of Nero, whom she invites to her private apartment.

Agrippina meanwhile frets beneath the likelihood of her plot unravelling and summons Pallante and Narciso to murder her enemies. Convincing Claudio that Ottone seeks to destroy him, she receives his pledge that Nero will be made his successor.

## Act 3

In a room with several doors, Poppea explains her scheme of revenge to Ottone, telling him to hide so that he can overhear her conversation with Claudio and Nero. When the latter enters, she warns him that Agrippina is nearby and that he had better make himself scarce. Claudio then appears, only to be taxed by Poppea with not loving her enough. In the earlier confusion, she maintains, Nero, not Ottone, was the real culprit. Persuading the emperor to hide as well, she is 'surprised' by Nero's sudden re-entry.

Claudio angrily orders him to leave at once, but Poppea then implores the emperor to intercede on her behalf with Agrippina. Left alone, she and Ottone can at last reaffirm their mutual love.

In the imperial palace Agrippina berates Nero for his weakness and he promises to renounce Poppea as an enemy. Pallante and Narciso now decide to reveal the truth about the empress's plot. When Claudio confronts her, she protests that she only wanted to thwart a potential revolution and convinces him of her loyalty. Poppea, she declares, is his genuine foe, as Ottone's lover. Claudio, however, surprises everybody by ordering Poppea's marriage to Nero. At this point Ottone intervenes, rejecting the succession and declaring his passion for Poppea. Magnanimously Claudio applauds the two lovers' constancy and names Nero as his heir. Agrippina is at last satisfied, a chorus hails the power of love and Juno, goddess of marriage, descends to bless the forthcoming union.

# George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

## Agrippina, HWV6 (1709)

An opera in three acts, based on a libretto by Vincenzo Grimani

The three years George Frideric Handel spent in Italy, from 1706 to 1709, mark a crucial phase in his artistic development. Self-financed and using his unerring instinct for meeting the best people in all the right places, the young composer moved at leisure between Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples, living more like an honoured guest than a mere entertainer among the princes, duchesses and cardinals who commissioned his music. Such intensely productive encounters allowed Handel to show his virtuosity in works as diverse in style and structure as the magisterial *Dixit Dominus* setting for a Roman vesper service, the oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, the wedding serenata *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* and the chamber cantatas written for his noble patron Francesco Maria Ruspoli.

The confidence he showed both professionally and socially, in an age when most working musicians were expected to assume a servile position in return for attention or employment, stood Handel in good stead when he visited Naples in the early summer of 1708. Here he was introduced to the city's viceroys, Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani, a figure of real distinction, praised as 'energetic in temperament, rich in resources, resolute in action' and admired by the Neapolitans for his integrity and plain dealing. Grimani was a Venetian, from a patrician clan noted for its love of the arts and a passion for collecting. The family had patronised painters such as Titian and Tintoretto and installed an outstanding ensemble of Greek and Roman sculptures in a superb vaulted gallery forming the centrepiece of their principal palace.

When not involved in negotiating the zigzags of politics as a diplomat and administrator, Vincenzo Grimani could indulge his passion for opera. In Venice he and his brother Giovanni had built themselves a theatre near the church of San Giovanni Grisostomo, opened in 1678 and noted as 'the finest and richest in the city'. The brothers were friends of the influential theatre poet

Apostolo Zeno and soon Vincenzo was turning his own hand to writing opera librettos. Whether Handel acquired the last of these, *Agrippina*, directly from the Cardinal himself is not clear. The latter seems in any case to have been careful not to attach his own authorship to any of the texts later ascribed to him. By the autumn of 1709, however, the composer was at work on the piece as a commission for the forthcoming season at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo, a direct result, surely, of Grimani's personal influence.

Ancient Rome was an inexhaustible source for Italian lyric drama in the Baroque era. At least a dozen of Handel's operas, including such mature masterpieces as *Radamisto* and *Giulio Cesare*, make use of plots, themes and characters derived from Roman historians. The world of empire-building and military prowess such writers evoked was an integral part of the cultural inheritance – 'the polite learning', to use a contemporary expression – of an 18th-century audience.

*Agrippina*, nevertheless, tells a Roman story with a difference. Whereas a work such as *Giulio Cesare* features the clangour of battle and the gallant enterprise of a seasoned warrior, such things in the earlier opera are kept firmly off-stage throughout the action. Claudio's appearance in Act 2, as a conquering hero carried on 'a triumphal machine', simply serves to heighten his grandstanding oafishness. Ottone, his immediate foil as a genuinely sympathetic figure, is shown as needing no such fanfares and razzmatazz to prove his courage, steadfastness and resilience.

Their Roman world is that of amorous intrigue and political skulduggery in an imperial court dominated by the scheming matriarch Agrippina, determined to secure the throne for her son Nerone. Unlike most other Baroque theatre poets, Grimani did not need to play fast and loose with the facts so as to develop a serviceable plotline for the standard three-act sequence of his libretto. It was all there, or most of it, in the pages of

Tacitus's *Annals* or Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars*. Neither writer claimed scrupulous impartiality and Suetonius is a shameless gossip, but a historical consensus suggests that they and their eminent Venetian adaptor have been precise enough in giving us the protagonists as they actually were, together with the 'devices and desires' which motivated them.

Handel himself, in sitting down to write the opera, must have recalled an earlier musical encounter with Agrippina herself. While in Naples he had written one of his most striking dramatic cantatas, *Dunque sarà pur vero*, a monologue for this fatally over-ambitious mother whom Nero had rewarded with an order for her execution. The range of differing moods and emotions explored here as she faces death may have helped to inspire him in handling a larger-scale treatment of the same character for the Venetian stage. If Agrippina dominates her opera, this is not simply a matter of theatrical decorum but because she radiates a calculating manipulateness entirely authentic to her as a woman with her place in history. The role's depth of perspective intensifies with the help of her wonderful Act 2 scena 'Pensieri voi mi tormentate', where Handel's brilliantly elastic experiments with the aria-and-recitative medium reveal the vulnerability behind her ruthlessness.

His pleasure in setting Grimani's witty and subversive libretto shimmers throughout the score. Arias are kept short and punchy, a cracking momentum is sustained from the outset and he clearly delights in the exercise of raising and lowering the temperature between successive dramatic episodes. The comic trio 'E quando mai', when Lesbo announces Agrippina's unwelcome arrival to Claudio and Poppea is one example, with others including Ottone's ravishing numbers 'Vaghe fonti', with its flutes and muted violins, and the melting siciliano 'Purch'io ti stringa al sen'. Everything coheres to suggest a complete sympathy of intention between the composer and the cardinal.

Handel, what's more, knew his Venice. It is likely that he spent part of the 1707 winter opera season there, hearing works by Caldara and Alessandro Scarlatti which made a distinct impact on him and getting the feel of a Venetian opera audience, with its critical ears, love of strong storylines and fondness for singable melodies. Now, when called upon to face the public at the city's smartest theatre, he was fully prepared for such demands. He needed, all the same, to work

quickly, with the result that most of the *Agrippina* score was adapted from his earlier compositions or, in certain cases, borrowed its ideas from his favourite German opera composer, Reinhard Keiser.

It was safe to assume that nobody in the first-night audience was any the wiser. The cast assembled was first-class, headed as it was by the soprano Margherita Durastanti in the title-role. She was the earliest of those various singers whom Handel, throughout his career, rewarded for their musical intelligence and dramatic gifts by adapting his style specifically to show off their distinctive talents. Nerone was sung by the castrato Valeriano Pellegrini, while the much-admired Diamante Scarabelli took the part of Poppea. Ottone, in his earliest stage incarnation, was a breeches role, performed by Francesca Vanini, whose husband the bass Giuseppe Maria Boschi, singing Pallante, later joined Handel's King's Theatre company in London.

Opening at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo on 26 December 1709, *Agrippina* was a rousing success, which ran, according to Handel's earliest biographer John Mainwaring, for a record 27 performances. The same writer tells us that 'the audience was so enchanted with the performance that a stranger who should have seen the manner in which they were affected, would have imagined they had all been distracted'. Spectators applauded Handel as 'il caro Sassone', 'the dear Saxon', with 'other expressions of approbation too extravagant to be mentioned'.

Mainwaring says that they were 'thunderstruck with the grandeur and sublimity of his style', though neither of these were Handel's aim in this knowing and sophisticated comedy of scandal, ambition and politics. Its triumph was the final flourish in an Italian experience which made a permanent impact on his creative achievement. A single sad note lay in the absence from Venice of Vincenzo Grimani, busy bringing justice and equity to the Neapolitans. A few months later he died of bladder cancer, Naples duly mourned and the miraculous blood of the city's patron saint, Januarius, refused, in sympathy as it were, to accomplish its annual liquefaction. The cardinal's reward, three centuries afterwards, is his *Agrippina*'s discovery of fresh audiences as one of Handel's best-loved and most-frequently performed operas.

Programme note and synopsis © Jonathan Keates

# About the performers



Maxim Emelyanychev

## **Maxim Emelyanychev** director/harpsichord

Maxim Emelyanychev is an outstanding representative of the rising generation of young conductors. He was born in 1988 to a family of musicians and first studied conducting at the Nizhny Novgorod Music School, continuing his education in the conducting class of Gennady Rozhdestvensky at the Moscow Conservatory and studying fortepiano and harpsichord with Maria Uspenskaya. He has been a prize-winner at many international keyboard competitions.

He made his conducting debut at the age of 12 and has since conducted both Baroque and symphony orchestras. He is Principal Conductor of Il Pomo d'Oro and Principal Conductor of the Nizhny-Novgorod Youth Symphony Orchestra.

He has collaborated with such renowned artists as Riccardo Minasi, Max Emanuel Cencic, Xavier Sabata, Julia Lezhneva, Sophie Karthäuser, Franco Fagioli, Dmitry Sinkovsky, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Alexei Lubimov, Theodor Currentzis, Patrizia Ciofi, Stephen Hough, Richard Goode, Katia and Marielle Labèque and Joyce DiDonato.

In the 2016–17 season he made debuts with the Zurich Opera, conducting a new production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse in a concert of Beethoven and Brahms. He toured 'In War and Peace' with Joyce DiDonato, which was also recorded and won a *Gramophone* Award.

Highlights last season included a return to Toulouse and Seville, to which he was reinvited for concerts in the current season; his debut with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano; and invitations to conduct the Orchestre National de Lyon, Belgian National Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Bordeaux and the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra.

Highlights this season include concerts with the Netherlands, Royal and St Petersburg Philharmonic orchestras, Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in *Rinaldo* at the Glyndebourne Festival.

Next season he becomes Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and also conducts the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the Royal Opera House (*Agrippina*). He returns to the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Other engagements include the Berliner Konzerthausorchester, Iceland and Seattle Symphony orchestras and the St Petersburg Philharmonic. The following season he conducts *La clemenza di Tito* at Geneva's Grand Théâtre, *The Magic Flute* at the Toulouse Théâtre du Capitole and makes his debut with the Munich Philharmonic conducting Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Maxim Emelyanychev's disc of Mozart piano sonatas (*Aparté*) won a number of awards. In October last year he released a disc of Beethoven's Third Symphony and Brahms's *Haydn* Variations with the Nizhny Novgorod Soloists Chamber Orchestra (*Aparté*). In April he received the Newcomer Award at the International Opera Awards.



Joyce DiDonato

## Joyce DiDonato Agrippina

Kansas-born Joyce DiDonato has won multiple Grammy awards and a 2018 Olivier Award. She engages audiences across the globe, and has been proclaimed 'perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation' by *The New Yorker*. She is acclaimed not only as a performer but also as a fierce advocate for the arts, and has attained international prominence in operas by Handel and Mozart, as well as through her wide-ranging, award-winning discography. She is also widely acclaimed for the *bel canto* roles of Rossini and Donizetti.

Much in demand on the concert and recital circuit, she has recently held residencies at Carnegie Hall and here at the Barbican Centre, toured extensively in South America, Europe and Asia and appeared as guest soloist at the Last Night of the BBC Proms. Recent highlights include concerts with the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Ricardo Muti, and extensive touring with Il Pomo d'Oro under Maxim Emelyanychev, as well as recitals with the Brentano Quartet at the Wigmore Hall and with Sir Antonio Pappano at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

In opera her recent roles have included Sister Helen (Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*) at the

Teatro Real Madrid and the Barbican Centre; her first Didon (*Les Troyens*) under John Nelsons in Strasbourg; her first Semiramide in a new production at the Bavarian State Opera; the title-role in *Ariodante* on tour with The English Concert and Harry Bicket; Semiramide and Charlotte (*Werther*) under Pappano at the Royal Opera; and the title-role in *Cendrillon*, Adalgisa (*Norma*), Elena (*La donna del lago*) at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, as well as the title-role in *Maria Stuarda* for the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera and the Liceu Barcelona.

Highlights this season have included her first staged Didon at the Vienna State Opera, Sesto (*Giulio Cesare*) at the Metropolitan Opera and the title-role in *Agrippina* in concert with Il Pomo d'Oro. She has also performed at the BBC Proms and in Hamburg with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, the Philadelphia Orchestra at Carnegie Hall under Nézet-Séguin, Il Pomo d'Oro under Emelyanychev on tour to Moscow and Asia, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Muti and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Pappano. The season also saw the release of her latest major album, *SongPlay* (Warner), with which she toured the USA, as well as performances of *Winterreise* in Kansas City and Ann Arbor with Nézet-Séguin at the piano. Her season ends with a tour of Europe with NYO USA under Pappano.

Joyce DiDonato is an exclusive recording artist with Erato/Warner Classics; her most recent Erato operatic release, *Les Troyens*, was a winner at last year's International Opera Awards and *BBC Music Magazine Awards* and has been nominated for a 2019 *Gramophone Award*. Other recent albums include *In War & Peace*, which won a 2017 *Gramophone Award*, *Stella di Napoli*, her Grammy-Award-winning *Diva Divo* and *Drama Queens*. Other honours include the *Gramophone Artist of the Year* and *Recital of the Year* awards, and an induction into the *Gramophone Hall of Fame*.



Saskia Graneberg



Elsa Benoit

### Elsa Benoit Poppea

French soprano Elsa Benoit studied at the Amsterdam Conservatory and Dutch National Opera Academy before joining the Opera Studio at the Bavarian State Opera, appearing in Munich in roles such as the Countess Adèle (*Le Comte Ory*), Euridice (Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*) and Papagena (*The Magic Flute*). In the 2015–16 season she was a member of the ensemble at the Stadttheater Klagenfurt, where she sang Tytania (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Giulietta (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*) and Micaëla (*Carmen*), for which she won an Austrian Music Theatre Prize.

Since the 2016–17 season Elsa Benoit has been in the permanent ensemble of the Bavarian State Opera, where her roles have included Émilie (*Les Indes galantes*), Oscar (*Un ballo in maschera*), Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*). Highlights this season include the role of Poppea in the current tour of *Agrippina* with *Il Pomo d'Oro*, a part she reprises in a new production of the opera directed by Barrie Kosky and conducted by Ivor Bolton at the 2019 Munich Opera Festival. She opened the current season with her debut at the Basle Theatre in the role of Mélisande (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) and appeared as soloist in Camilla de Rossi's *Il sacrificio di Abramo* with the Netherlands Bach Society at the Amsterdam

Concertgebouw, to which she returned in December for Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under Leonardo García Alarcón, with a further concert at the Tivoli Vredenburg in Utrecht.

Other recent highlights include the title-role in Wolfgang Mitterer's *Marta* at Opéra de Lille and Opéra de Reims, as well as appearing in concert at the Cologne Philharmonie with Ensemble Modern.

Michael Novak



Xavier Sabata

### Xavier Sabata Ottone

Countertenor Xavier Sabata was born in Avia, Catalonia, trained as an actor at Barcelona's Institut del Teatre, and studied singing at the Escola Superior de Musica Catalunya and at the Musikhochschule, Karlsruhe, where his teachers were Hartmut Höll and Mitsuko Shirai.

Engagements this season include Bertarido (*Rodelinda*) with Claus Guth under Stefano Montanari at Opéra de Lyon and at the Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Chile; Ottone (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) under Diego Fasolis at the Berlin Staatsoper; Endimione (*La Calisto*) under Ivor Bolton at the Teatro Real, Madrid; and the world premiere of Benet Casablancas's *L'enigma di Lea* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona.

Last season's highlights included a new production of *Rodelinda* under Bolton at the Teatro Real; *Ottone* in a new production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* under Diego Fasolis at the Berlin Staatsoper; the title-role in *Rinaldo* on a European tour under Christophe Rousset and his recital debut in the Teatro de la Zarzuela Lied Cycle.

After early successes working with William Christie and Les Arts Florissants, he has appeared with such ensembles as Europa Galante, Collegium 1704, the Venice Baroque Orchestra, I Barocchisti, Al Ayre Español, El Concierto Español and Orquesta Barroca Sevilla. He collaborates regularly with conductors such as Harry Bicket, Fabio Biondi, Ivor Bolton, Fabio Bonizzoni, Alan Curtis, Diego Fasolis, Gabriel Garrido, René Jacobs, Xavier Díaz Latorre, Andrea Marcon, Riccardo Minasi, Christopher Moulds, George Petrou and Jordi Savall. He was awarded an Opera Actual Award in 2013 and an El Mundo Premi Tendències in 2014.

He has appeared at many leading venues and prominent festivals, including Innsbruck Early Music, Aix-en-Provence, Ambronay, Halle Handel and the Festival Via Stellae in Santiago de Compostela. His repertoire ranges from Cavalli and Monteverdi, via Baroque opera seria, to premieres of new music, such as Fabrice Bollon's *Oscar und die Dame in Rosa*.

His solo recorded programme *Bad Guys*, performed in Caen, Freiburg, Seville and Barcelona, received warm critical acclaim, as did his recent album *Dilettanti*. His most recent solo disc is *L'Alessandro amante*. Other highlights of his discography include Handel's *Alessandro*, *Ottone*, *Faramondo* and *Tamerlano*, as well as Vivaldi's *L'oracolo*.



Julian Lairdig

Franco Fagioli

## Franco Fagioli Nerone

Franco Fagioli is the leading virtuoso countertenor of our time, renowned for his artistry and technique as well as the beauty of his voice. He has an exclusive contract with DG, making his solo debut recording with the label with *Rossini*, with Armonia Atenea and George Petrou; he followed this with an album of Handel arias with Il Pomo d'Oro released last year and, with the same artists, recorded the title-role in *Serse*, which was released in November to critical acclaim.

Recent and forthcoming engagements include the title-role in *Serse*; Handel recitals with the Venice Baroque Orchestra in Japan; recitals in France and the UK featuring repertoire by Handel and Vinci with Il Pomo d'Oro; performances of Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* with Cecilia Bartoli and Cappella Gabetta in Switzerland and at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival; and the current concert performances of *Agrippina* in Luxembourg, Madrid, Barcelona, Paris and here in London, as well as a staged production of the same opera at the Bavarian State Opera in July.

Earlier this season he sang the title-role in *Serse* at the Staatstheater Karlsruhe and in a European concert tour with Il Pomo d'Oro; he also toured Asia with the Venice Baroque Orchestra; and

made his debut at the Hamburg State Opera as Ruggiero (*Alcina*).

Earlier highlights include his debut at La Scala, Milan, as Andronico (*Tamerlano*) and his debut for Dutch National Opera in the title-role of Cavalli's *Eliogabalo*. He also undertook concert tours with the Basle Chamber Orchestra, Il Pomo d'Oro and the Venice Baroque Orchestra.

Roles on the stage include Eliogabalo for the Opéra National de Paris; Arsace (*Semiramide*) for the Opéra National de Lorraine; Idamante (*Idomeneo*) for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; *Piacere (Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno)* for the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Opéra de Lille and the Théâtre de Caen; and the title-role in *Giulio Cesare* for the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and Zurich Opera.

He has also achieved distinction as a concert artist, appearing at the Halle, Ludwigsburg, Innsbruck and Salzburg festivals, collaborating regularly with such conductors as Rinaldo Alessandrini, Alan Curtis, Gabriel Garrido, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, René Jacobs, José Manuel Quintana, Marc Minkowski, Riccardo Muti and Christophe Rousset.

His award-winning discography includes the title-roles in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Ezio*, Pergolesi's *Adriano in Siria*, Handel's *Berenice* and *Teseo*, Vinci's *Artaserse* and *Catone in Utica*, Caldara's *La Concordia de' pianeti*, Hasse's *Siroe, re di Persia* and the solo albums *Arias for Caffarelli* and *Il maestro Porpora*. In 2010 he was named 'Singer of the Year' by Italy's *L'Opera* magazine, and a year later became the first countertenor in 30 years to receive Italy's highest award for music, the Premio Abbiati. Last year he was named Argentinian Singer of the Year by the Argentinian Music Critics Association.



Catherine Pisoni

Luca Pisoni

### Luca Pisoni Claudio

Italian bass-baritone Luca Pisoni has established himself as one of the most charismatic and versatile singers today. Since his debut at the age of 26 with the Vienna Philharmonic under Nikolaus Harnoncourt at the Salzburg Festival, he has been in demand at the world's leading opera houses, concert halls and festivals.

Highlights last season included the role of Mahomet II (Rossini's *Le siège de Corinthe*) in his debut at the Rossini Opera Festival, followed by role debuts as Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) at the Opéra de Paris and Mustafà (*L'italiana in Algeri*) at the Vienna State Opera. He returned to the Metropolitan Opera stage as Count Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and sang Méphistophélès (Gounod's *Faust*) at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow. He also performed the roles of Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*) and Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) at the Vienna State Opera and made his debut in the role of Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*) at La Scala, Milan, under the baton of Myung-Whun Chung.

This season he sings in Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* at the Konzerthaus Wien and the Luxembourg Philharmonie; Beethoven's Mass in C with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

under Mariss Jansons; Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* with the London Symphony Orchestra and Michael Tilson Thomas; the role of Argante (*Rinaldo*) on tour with The English Concert under Harry Bicket; Schubert song orchestrations with the Filarmonica della Scala under Fabio Luisi; Mozart's C minor Mass with Concentus Musicus Wien at the Vienna Musikverein; and a Rossini Gala with the Orchestra Sinfonica della RAI under Luisi. He also gives all-Schubert recitals with pianist Malcolm Martineau in Berlin and Essen, and additionally performs a programme of Italian and American songs in Florence, Trento and Philadelphia.

In addition to his extensive opera and concert appearances, he has given critically acclaimed recitals at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Edinburgh Festival, Vienna Musikverein, Vancouver Recital Society and Dortmund Konzerthaus, among many others.

Luca Pisaroni has recorded for all the major labels, and his discography includes *Don Giovanni* and *Rinaldo* from the Glyndebourne Festival; *The Marriage of Figaro* with Opéra National de Paris; *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro* from the Salzburg Festival; and *Don Giovanni* with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Additional releases include *Simon Boccanegra* and, most recently, the title-role in *The Marriage of Figaro* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Nézet-Séguin.

Nicola Garzetti



Andrea Mastroni

### **Andrea Mastroni** Pallante

Italian bass Andrea Mastroni began his musical education as a clarinetist before switching to vocal studies and training with Lella Cuberli, Rita Antoniazzi and Fernando Cordeiro Opa, graduating from the Istituto Claudio Monteverdi in Cremona. His awards include the Mario Basiola prize (2005), the Giuseppe Di Stefano prize (Trapani) for his portrayal of Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, the Bibiena (Mantua) prize (2007) and the XXXVII Franco Abbiati Prize for his performance in Filippo Perocco's *Aquagrandà* at Teatro La Fenice.

His operatic repertoire includes *Rigoletto*, *La fanciulla del West*, *La bohème*, *L'Orfeo*, *Macbeth*, *Turandot*, *The Magic Flute* and *Don Carlo*.

He has appeared at many leading opera venues, including the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Verona Arena, Zurich Opera, Palermo's Teatro Massimo, Metropolitan Opera, New York, La Scala, Milan, Madrid's Teatro Real, Opéra de Montecarlo, Opéra de Paris, La Fenice, Opéra de Oviedo, Bavarian State Opera, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Cincinnati Opera and Hamburg State Opera.

His roles include Rocco (*Fidelio*), Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Hundung (*Die Walküre*), Selim (*Il turco in Italia*), Cardinal de Brogni (*La Juive*), the King

of Scotland (*Ariodante*), Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*), Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), Mustàfa (*L'italiana in Algeri*), King Mark (*Tristan und Isolde*) and the title-roles in *Don Giovanni* and *Don Pasquale*, among many others.

In concert he has performed Bach's *St John Passion* at the Ravenna Festival and at the MiTo Festival, Shostakovich's *King Lear* with the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, Beethoven's Symphony No 9 with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and Mozart's Requiem in Padua with I Solisti Veneti and the Anima Mundi Festival under Christopher Hogwood.

His discography includes Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* with Fabio Luisi and the Orchestra del Teatro Carlo Felice (Decca); *Semiramide* with Antonino Fogliani and Virtuosi Brunensis (Naxos); a disc of Duparc songs with Mattia Ometti (Brilliant Classics); *I vespi siciliani* (C Major) and Marchetti's *Romeo e Giulietta* (Dynamic). He appears on the recent recording of *Seise* with Il Pomo d'Oro (DG). He has just released a disc of Handel bass arias with the Accademia dell'Annunciata.

Engagements this season and beyond include Pallante at the Bavarian State Opera and Royal Opera House; *Achille in Sciro*, and *The Magic Flute* at Teatro Real Madrid. Concerts include *Tristan und Isolde* in concert with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, *Songs and Dances of Death* with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, *Tiresias (Oedipus rex)* with the Berlin Philharmonic under Kirill Petrenko, and *L'enfance du Christ* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner at La Scala. He will also sing *Ariodante* at Valencia's Palau de les Arts, conducted by Andrea Marcon, Rocco at the Oviedo Opera House, Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*) at the Liceu and *Il turco in Italia* at the Glyndebourne Festival. He also returns to the Metropolitan Opera in the coming seasons.



Carlo Vistoli

### **Carlo Vistoli** Narciso

Carlo Vistoli began his vocal training as a countertenor with William Matteuzzi and Sonia Prina in 2007. He studied at the Frescobaldi Conservatory in Ferrara and at the University of Bologna and made his professional stage debut in 2012 as the Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*) in Cesena and Ravenna.

Highlights of his career since then have included Licida in Mysliveček's *L'Olimpiade* in Bologna, the title-role in *Tamerlano* under Alexis Kossenko in Poznań, Tolomeo (*Giulio Cesare*) with Opera Fuoco under David Stern in Shanghai, a world tour as a member of William Christie's academy Le Jardin des Voix, the world premiere of Adriano Guarneri's video opera *L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle* at the 2015 Ravenna Festival, Febo (Caldara's *Dafne*) in Venice, *Dido and Aeneas* at the Teatro Regio in Turin, Ottone (*Agrippina*) in Brisbane – for which he won a Helpmann Award – Arvo Pärt's *Stabat mater* at the MITO Festival in Turin and Milan, a European tour of *Messiah* under Christie and Human Frailty (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) and Ottone (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) as part of John Eliot Gardiner's Monteverdi 450 project, which was seen at the 2017 Salzburg Festival as well as in Berlin, Edinburgh, Lucerne, Paris, Venice, Chicago and New York. Also in 2017 he toured Europe performing Monteverdi's *Selva morale* with Les Arts Florissants under Christie

and sang Idraspe (Cavalli's *Erismena*) under Leonardo García Alarcón at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, with later performances in Versailles and Saint-Denis, and the Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*) under Christie on a tour of the USA.

Highlights of 2018 included Ruggiero (Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso*) under Diego Fasolis in Venice; *Jephtha* in Hanover; *Israel in Egypt* with the Accademia Bizantina in Oslo; Bach's *St John Passion* under Enrico Onofri in Lisbon; and a new production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in Salzburg under William Christie, staged by Jan Lauwers.

Current engagements include Ulisse (Sacconi's *La finta pazza*) in Dijon; Orfeo (*Orfeo ed Euridice*) at Rome Opera under Gianluca Capuano; and a European tour as Athamas (*Semele*) under Gardiner.

Carlo Vistoli works regularly with early music ensembles such as the Accademia Bizantina, Les Ambassadeurs, Concerto Italiano, Les Musiciens du Louvre and Il Pomo d'Oro and has taken part in numerous CD recordings. His first solo album, *Arias for Nicolino* with I Talenti Vulcanici under Stefano Demicheli, was released in 2017.



Biagio Pizzuti

## **Biagio Pizzuti** Lesbo

Biagio Pizzuti was born in Salerno and began his piano studies at the age of 8, graduating with the

highest honours in piano and vocal studies from the conservatory of his home city.

He then studied with Rolando Panerai, Renato Bruson and Alessandro Corbelli and attended the Opera Studio of Rome's Santa Cecilia Academy under the guidance of Renata Scottò. He subsequently joined the ensemble of the Carlo Felice Theatre in Genova, appearing as Marcello and Schaunard (*La bohème*) and Grégorio (*Roméo et Juliette*), recording the latter for Decca.

He recently won the 47th Toti dal Monte Competition and sang the role of Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). Other operatic appearances include the role of Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) in Canada and Maribor; Massenet's *Cléopâtre* at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival; Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) in Spoleto; Betto (*Gianni Schicchi*) at the Theater an der Wien and the Teatro Comunale in Florence; the title-role in *Don Giovanni* in Ferrara; Don Bartolo (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) and Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) at Palermo's Teatro Massimo; and Fabrizio and Pacuvio (*La pietra del paragone*) at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris. He has also sung in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the Bellini Theatre in Catania.

Among recent and future highlights are Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) in Liverpool; Don Prudenno in a new production of *Il viaggio a Reims* in Amsterdam; Schaunard at the Teatro San Carlo, Naples; Taddeo (*L'italiana in Algeri*) and Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*) in Florence; Fauré's Requiem in Verona; Macrobio (*La pietra del paragone*) in Cagliari; Leporello in Basle; Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) in Treviso and Ferrara; and Dr Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*) at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo. He made his debut at Verona's Arena Opera Festival as Moralès and Le Dancaire (*Carmen*) last summer.

He has recorded *Serse* and *Agrippina* for DG.

## Il Pomo d'Oro

Il Pomo d'Oro is an orchestra founded in 2012 with a special focus on opera, but equally committed to instrumental performance in various formations. Its musicians are among the finest period-instrumentalists to be found worldwide. The ensemble has worked with conductors Riccardo Minasi, Maxim Emelyanychev, Stefano Montanari, George Petrou, Enrico Onofri and Francesco Corti. The orchestra's leader Zefira Valova has also directed it in various projects. Since 2016 Maxim Emelyanychev has been its chief conductor.

It is a regular guest in prestigious concert halls and at festivals all over Europe. It has toured widely its 2016 recording with Joyce DiDonato, *In War & Peace*, conducted by Emelyanychev, which won an ECHO Klassik Award and a Gramophone Award.

Il Pomo d'Oro has released several operas: Handel's *Tamerlano*, *Partenope* and *Ottone* and Vinci's *Catone in Utica*. It has also recorded recitals with the countertenors Jakub Józef Orliński, Franco Fagioli, Max Emanuel Cencic and Xavier Sabata, mezzo-sopranos Ann Hallenberg and Joyce DiDonato and sopranos Francesca Aspromonte and Emöke Barath. Among its instrumental albums are Haydn's violin and harpsichord concertos, as well as a cello disc with

Edgar Moreau which received an ECHO Klassik Award in 2016. Further instrumental recordings feature the violin concertos and harpsichord concertos of J S Bach with Shunske Sato and Francesco Corti as soloists.

The most recent additions to its discography are *Handel Arias* with Franco Fagioli, *Prologue*, a disc of 17th-century opera prologues with Francesca Aspromonte, *Serse* with Franco Fagioli in the title-role, *Anima Sacra* with Jakub Józef Orliński, Alessandro Stradella's opera *La Doriclea* and *Voglio cantar* with Emöke Barath, to mark Barbara Strozzi's 400th anniversary.

In 2016 it became an ambassador of El Sistema Greece, a humanitarian project which aims to combat refugee children's loss of home and identity by offering them musical education and encouraging creativity, as well as giving concerts, workshops and music lessons.

The name of the ensemble comes from Antonio Cesti's eponymous opera of 1666. Composed for the wedding celebrations of Emperor Leopold I and Margarita Teresa of Spain, *Il Pomo d'Oro* was probably one of the largest, most expensive and most spectacular opera productions in the still young history of the genre, involving 24 different stage designs, a horse-ballet featuring 300 horses, a fireworks display of 73,000 rockets and numerous special effects.

# Il Pomo d'Oro

## Director/ Harpsichord

Maxim Emelyanychev

## Violin 1

Zefira Valova  
Stefano Rossi  
Edson Scheid  
Dimitris Karakantas  
Heriberto Delgado

## Violin 2

Elfa Run  
Daniela Nuzzoli  
Irma Niskanen  
Giulia Panzeri  
Alessia Pazzaglia

## Viola

Giulio D'Alessio  
Muriel Razavi  
Lola Fernández

## Cello

Ludovico Minasi  
Cristina Vidoni  
Natalia Timofeeva

## Double Bass

Nicola Dalmaso

## Oboe/Flute

Roberto de Franceschi  
Petra Ambrosi

## Bassoon

Katrin Lazar

## Theorbo

Gianluca Geremia



barbican

# Classical Music

## 2019–20

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Pretty Yende / Angela Gheorghiu

Weber's *Der Freischütz*  
Handel's *Rodelinda*  
David Lang's *prisoner of the state*  
Joby Talbot's *Everest*



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