

SALZBURG WHITSUN FESTIVAL

Artistic Director: Cecilia Bartoli



Final Press Release of the 2019 Salzburg Whitsun Festival

(SF, 10 June 2019) This was the eighth Whitsun Festival under the artistic directorship of Cecilia Bartoli: entitled *Voci celesti – Heavenly Voices*, the Salzburg Whitsun Festival from 7 to 10 June 2019 was dedicated to the memory of the great castrato voices.

“Two important decisions for the future of the Festival have just recently been taken. On 21 May, the Board of Trustees extended the contract of our highly successful artistic director, Markus Hinterhäuser. His first official act was to ask the wonderful Cecilia Bartoli to extend her own contract as artistic director until 2026, giving the Whitsun Festival her very special programmatic focus. And Cecilia joyfully said yes,” Festival President **Helga Rabl-Stadler** declares.

“The Salzburg Whitsun Festival has always seemed to me the best of all festival worlds! I find it deeply moving that I have already been sharing my programming ideas with all my wonderful colleagues and, most importantly, with our faithful audience, for eight years. I have ideas and concepts for at least another 100, but don’t worry: the extension of the contract until 2026 also includes new projects supporting young artists, so that we will hopefully be spared the vision of the ageing artistic director being carried offstage,” says **Cecilia Bartoli**, Artistic Director of the Salzburg Whitsun Festival.

More than **11,400 visitors** from **49 nations** attended the 2019 Whitsun Festival in Salzburg. Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Russia, Great Britain, the USA, Italy, Japan and Spain are the top 10 nationalities of visitors this year. The trend of recent years towards a strong core of regular visitors has continued this year. The Festival notes with great pleasure that the share of visitors attending several performances has risen once again. The overall rate of occupied seats reached a remarkable **99 percent**.

The press office accredited 89 journalists from 17 countries all over the world for this year’s Salzburg Whitsun Festival.



Lukas Crepaz (Executive Director), Helga Rabl-Stadler (Festival President), Markus Hinterhäuser (Artistic Director) and Cecilia Bartoli (Artistic Director of the Salzburg Whitsun Festival). Photo: SF/Neumayr



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Passionate applause and standing ovations greeted the music and staging of Handel's *Alcina*, which opened this year's Whitsun Festival. In his production, Damiano Michieletto moved the magical plot of the baroque opera to a hotel which dissolves during the course of the evening. Alcina is portrayed as an aging woman losing not only her power, but also her attractiveness, youth and ultimately her life. In keeping with the dominant theme of deception, the stage designer Paolo Fantin installed an opaque screen on the revolving stage, which also served as a projection screen for the videos created by rocafilm. Agostino Cavalca designed the costumes, Alessandro Carletti was responsible for lighting and Thomas Wilhelm for the opera's choreography. Gianluca Capuano, Les Musiciens du Prince – Monaco and the Salzburg Bach Choir were acclaimed by the press for their rendering of Handel's colourful score. The inspiring ensemble included Philippe Jaroussky as Ruggiero, Sandrine Piau in the role of Morgana, Kristina Hammarström as Bradamante, Christoph Strehl as Oronte, Alastair Miles in the role of Melisso and Sheen Park, a member of the Vienna Boys' Choir, as Oberto. The cast and Cecilia Bartoli, Artistic Director of the Whitsun Festival, returned to the stage several times, receiving extensive standing ovations, which were repeated during the second performance on Sunday.

The **panel discussion** on Saturday morning discussed the phenomenon of the castrati, that terrible tradition practiced and documented from the 12th century until 1913. The journalist, music critic and author Jürgen Kesting moderated a conversation with alto Jochen Kowalski, musicologist Corinna Herr and Bernhard Richter, a physician specialized in phoniatrics and paediatric audiology.

Extensive applause and standing ovations continued on Saturday when Nicola Porpora's *Polifemo* was performed – in 1735, the year of its first performance, this work was considered direct competition for Handel's *Alcina*. Max Emanuel Cenčić took on not only the main role of Ulisse, but also staged the production. George Petrou conducted the Salzburg Bach Choir and Armonia Atenea. The captivating ensemble of singers included Yuriy Mylenko, Pavel Kudinov, Julia Lezhneva, Dilyara Idrisova and Sonja Runje and was costumed by Giorgina Germanou. Shaped like an island, Margit Ann Berger's stage set left no doubt that the semi-staged performance originally planned had ultimately become a fully staged one.

The audience also flocked enthusiastically to the screenings of the film *Farinelli – Il Castrato* presented by "Das Kino" on Saturday and Whitsunday.

Great baroque arias and duets by George Frideric Handel, Nicola Porpora, Johann Adolph Hasse and Riccardo Broschi were featured on Saturday evening at the **gala concert *Farinelli & Friends***. Under the baton of Gianluca Capuano, the Whitsun Festival's Artistic Director Cecilia Bartoli was joined by Julie Fuchs, Patricia Petibon, Sandrine Piau, Nuria Rial, Lea Desandre, Vivica Genaux, Ann Hallenberg, Christophe Dumaux and Philippe Jaroussky, by the Salzburg Bach Choir and Les Musiciens du Prince – Monaco, leaving the audience enchanted. As the conferencier, Rolando Villazón offered insights into the historical background of the music, earning many laughs with his special stage presence. Once again, thunderous applause and standing ovations ensued.

On Whitsunday, the audience acknowledged the rarely-performed jewel of sacred music, Antonio Caldara's oratorio *La morte d'Abel*, with several minutes of applause.



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The Tallis Scholars under the leadership of Peter Phillips created special moments with soloists Alexander Chance (countertenor), Frank Erik Stadler (violin), Predrag Katanic (viola) and Florian Simma (cello) during the **sacred concert *Stabat Mater / Pärt*** on Whitsunday evening at the Kollegienkirche.

This was juxtaposed with the **sacred concert *Stabat Mater / Pergolesi***, which also featured works by Antonio Vivaldi. Andrés Gabetta led his ensemble Cappella Gabetta from the violin. Together with Cecilia Bartoli and countertenor Franco Fagioli, they captivated the audience, which thanked them with hearty applause.

The finale of this year's Whitsun Festival will be the Cathedral Concert tonight, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner. The programme includes sacred music for Whitsun by Tomás Luis de Victoria and Heinrich Schütz as well as polyphonic masterworks of the baroque era by Henry Purcell, Johann Sebastian Bach and Claudio Monteverdi. The Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists perform.

The opera *Alcina* will be revived during the summer: the premiere takes place on **8 August 2019**, and further performances are scheduled for 10, 13, 16 and 18 August at the Haus für Mozart. All performances are already nearly sold out.

The life of Pauline Viardot-Garcia – singer, musical ambassador of Europe, outstanding pianist and composer – is the programmatic focus of the **2020 Salzburg Whitsun Festival**. Entitled *La couleur du temps – The Colour of Time*, the Salzburg Whitsun Festival takes place from 29 May to 1 June 2020.

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Rolex's commitment to the arts dates back to the 1970s when New Zealand soprano Dame Kiri Te Kanawa became the first cultural Testimonee. This commitment has developed to include many other leading artists, prestigious institutions and festivals. Among the partnerships are Cecilia Bartoli, Jonas Kaufmann and Plácido Domingo as well as leading opera houses such as the legendary Teatro alla Scala in Milan, London's historic Royal Opera House and the world-renowned Metropolitan Opera. In 2012, Rolex was delighted to incorporate the highly acclaimed Salzburg Festival, as well as the Whitsun Festival directed by Cecilia Bartoli, into its cultural portfolio. Support from Rolex enables the Salzburg Whitsun Festival to present a valuable staged production every year.

Photographs are available via: <http://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/fotoservice>

Kind regards,
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