

Final Press Release of the 2021 Salzburg Whitsun Festival



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

(SF, 24 May 2021) Euphoric applause from the audience and 99.5 percent of seats filled (based on the 50 percent of maximum capacity currently permitted by the authorities), but also the passion and joy of the artists on stage bore witness to the immensity of everyone's longing for culture and the arts. The 2021 Salzburg Whitsun Festival was the first major classical music festival worldwide to take place after the end of the cultural lockdown, running from 21 to 24 May.

Under the motto ROMA ÆTERNA, Cecilia Bartoli invited the audience on a musical journey through her hometown, Rome. This was the tenth Whitsun Festival programme the artistic director had conceived for Salzburg.

"How we artists have missed our audience! – The electricity in the air, the tension before the performance, the empty stage, the moments of silence before the storm when the lights go down in the hall. Then our entrance, the incredible energy which charges the air between performer and audience, like a fireball. And then that pure feeling of happiness when a performance goes well. I am infinitely grateful that we were able to experience this anew in Salzburg after the pandemic, and I thank the artists for their burning passion, the Festival staff for the dedication with which they mastered the many logistic difficulties, the Festival directorate for its continuous support, and the wonderful audience which accompanied us during this unique festival with an attention and concentration that reached an entirely new level. Mille grazie!" Thus the Artistic Director of the Salzburg Whitsun Festival, **Cecilia Bartoli**.

"How fortunate we are to have Cecilia Bartoli. How fortunate that this little Whitsun miracle was possible, with her and the other wonderful artists! These four days of glorious musical experiences give us confidence for an equally successful summer." With these words, Artistic Director **Markus Hinterhäuser** thanked Cecilia Bartoli for her incomparable commitment.

More than **5,767** (including at the jung & jede*r performance *Die Zertrennlichen*) **visitors** from **20 nations** attended the 2021 Whitsun Festival in Salzburg. Austria, Germany, Switzerland,

France and Italy were the top 5 nations this year. The rate of seats filled was **99.5 percent** of the 50 percent of total seating capacity currently permitted by the authorities.

70 journalists were accredited by the press office, publishing in media from 12 countries.

The strategy for implementing the 2021 Whitsun Festival remained the same as during the past, highly successful Festival year: developing an artistically meaningful and economically viable festival programme under the primacy of health. The safety plan from the previous year was adapted to the current regulations issued by the Ministry of Health – mainly the admission regulations for persons who have been vaccinated, previously infected or tested (the so-called “3G rules”). Tickets were personalized and identities verified via official IDs. All venues were occupied to a maximum of 50 percent, with audience members seated in a checkerboard pattern. FFP2 facemasks were required for the duration of every performance. The additional checks of each person entering the venues required by the authorities from presenters were accomplished by significantly higher numbers of ushers and front-of-house staff and with great discipline from the audience members. As during the past summer, all events took place without intermissions and gastronomy.

“We are delighted that our prevention plan was implemented so responsibly by all those involved – by our artists, staff and audience. Once again, we were able to prove that professionally managed cultural events do not pose an elevated risk. As early as Whitsun, large parts of our audience had already been vaccinated. We now hope for a significant relaxing of restrictions, especially regarding seating capacity, for the summer,” says Executive Director **Lukas Crepaz**.

Standing ovations greeted the premiere of George Frideric Handel's ***Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*** on Friday evening, launching this year's Whitsun Festival. Robert Carsen relocated the conflict of the allegorical figures, Beauty (Bellezza), Pleasure (Piacere), Time (Tempo) and Disillusion/True Knowledge (Disinganno), in our present time, presenting a casting show in which Bellezza – sung by Mélissa Petit – is the winner. In the first act, Gideon Davey, responsible for sets and costumes, created a glamorous backdrop; in the second, during which Time and Knowledge gain increasing importance, the audience was faced with an enormous mirror. As her agent, Piacere (Cecilia Bartoli) continuously seduced Bellezza into excessive partying. In “Lascia la spina, cogli la rosa“, presumably the oratorio's most well-known aria, she created a touching highlight. Gianluca Capuano and Les Musiciens du Prince-Monaco were celebrated by the audience. Lawrence Zazzo as Disinganno and Charles Workman in the role of Tempo earned no less enthusiastic applause. The standing ovations for Cecilia Bartoli and her team were repeated after the second performance on Sunday.

Generous applause also rewarded the orchestra concert **Poema sinfonica** at the Großes Festspielhaus, in which Zubin Mehta took the audience on a grand tour of Italy with works by Ottorino Respighi and Felix Mendelssohn. The four-movement symphonic poem *Pini di Roma* by Ottorino Respighi tells a programmatic tale of the city's silent witnesses, the Roman pines. The Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino also played the „Italian“ Symphony by Mendelssohn and his Violin Concerto, in which Maxim Vengerov was the celebrated soloist. Maxim Vengerov dedicated his encore, a Sarabande by Bach, to all artists who lost their lives to Covid-19.

Seven minutes of standing ovations and tremendous jubilation ended the final day of the Whitsun Festival after the concert performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *opera seria La*

clemenza di Tito at the Haus für Mozart. Cecilia Bartoli made her role debut as Sesto; Charles Workman sang the title role. Anna Prohaska appeared as Vitellia, Mélissa Petit as Servilia, Lea Desandre as Annio and Peter Kálmán as Publio. Gianluca Capuano conducted Les Musiciens du Prince-Monaco and the Salzburg Bach Choir.

Whitsunday also began with extraordinary applause. The audience thanked Cecilia Bartoli enthusiastically for the concert ***What passion cannot music raise***, in which she performed baroque arias by Handel, Porpora, Hasse, Telemann and Vivaldi together with conductor Gianluca Capuano and Les Musiciens du Prince-Monaco. The Festival's artistic director had spontaneously added this matinee performance as a substitute for a performance by Sir John Eliott Gardiner and his ensembles, which had to be cancelled due to the latter's chagrin due to the British quarantine rules.

The fact that Cecilia Bartoli sang the challenging role of Sesto on Saturday evening, a recital on Sunday morning in which she shone on stage for an hour and 45 minutes, and then gave a touching rendition of the role of Piacere in the second performance of *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* at 5 pm that day illustrates the incomparable commitment of this great singer to the artistic cause.

On Whitsun Monday, Philippe Jaroussky, who made his Whitsun Festival debut as a singer in 2009, made his conducting debut at the Festival, leading a performance of Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorio ***Cain, ovvero Il primo omicidio***. The Ensemble Artaserse, which he founded, and the ensemble of singers enchanted the audience: Kresimir Spicer as Adamo, Inga Kalna in the role of Eva, Bruno de Sá as Abelle, Filippo Mineccia in the role of Caino, Paul-Antoine Bénos-Djian as Voce di Dio and Yannis François as Voce di Lucifero.

For the crowning finale of this year's Whitsun Festival, Giacomo Puccini's ***Tosca*** will be performed in a concert version today at 3 pm, featuring a high-carat ensemble of singers: Anna Netrebko sings the title role, Jonas Kaufmann is heard as Mario Cavaradossi, and Luca Salsi sings Scarpia. Zubin Mehta conducts the Orchestra e Coro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and the Salzburger Festspiele und Theater Kinderchor. In further roles, the performance features Alessandro Spina as Cesare Angelotti, Alfonso Antoniozzi as Sagrestano, Francesco Pittari as Spoletta, Giulio Mastrototaro in the roles of Sciarrone and Adolfo Corrado as Carceriere. This opera holds special memories for Cecilia Bartoli: as a ten-year-old, she made her debut at the Opera in Rome in the role of the Pastorello, which she also performs today.

The **film series "Roma Amor"**, presented in cooperation with DAS KINO, was also positively received by the audience.

"Summarizing this Whitsun Festival, one might rephrase the title of our staged production as *Il trionfo del Coraggio, della Fantasia e della Qualità* – the triumph of courage, imagination and quality. We thank the artists who made this triumph possible, but also our wonderful, enthusiastic audience. As Festival founder Max Reinhardt said: 'The best must be assembled not only on stage, but also in the auditorium, if the perfect miracle of which theatre is capable on happy evenings is to ensue'," said Festival President **Helga Rabl-Stadler**.

This summer, the staged production ***Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*** will be revived: the premiere takes place on **4 August 2021**; further performances are scheduled for 8, 12, 14, and 17 August at the Haus für Mozart.

The **programme of the 2022 Salzburg Whitsun Festival** will also be published in August.

Our special thanks go to **Rolex**. The partnership with Rolex has enabled the Whitsun Festival to present a new staged opera production every year since 2012. This successful partnership was extended last year through 2027.

Photographs are available at: <https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/presse/fotoservice>

Kind regards,

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