



SALZBURGER
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Newsletter of the 2024 Salzburg Festival

Artistic Director Markus Hinterhäuser has entrusted the new production of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (*Tales of Hoffmann*) by Jacques Offenbach to director **Mariame Clément**. Marc Minkowski conducts the Vienna Philharmonic, the orchestral lodestar of the Salzburg Festival.



Director Mariame Clément



Mariame Clément, a native of Paris, was irresistibly attracted to opera even at the early age of five. To this day, she is fascinated by this “magical art form”, as she calls it, because it is artificial and stylized, but also touches us in a very profound, concrete and direct way. She makes her Salzburg debut with an opera which has not been shown at the Festival since 2003: *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. In our interview, she offers first insights into her views on the work.

In his last, not entirely completed work, Offenbach puts an historical personality on stage as an opera figure: the German romantic poet E.T.A. Hoffmann. Who is the Hoffmann we encounter in this “opéra fantastique”?

Indeed, Hoffmann's true identity is the central question when staging *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. The challenge is to understand the main figure and recognize what it has to tell us. Certainly, Hoffmann – like his real-life model – is an artist, and of course he is the author of the tales we witness in the three central acts. Unusually, Hoffmann also appears as an active figure in these tales. Thereby, the piece transports the notion that every artist recounts himself, his own ego, in his works. In my production, I want to explore how art and life interweave in this concrete case. In doing so, I will connect the three tales with individual stations of Hoffmann's biography as an artist.

The tales are all unhappy love stories, in which Hoffmann depicts himself as the “victim” of the female protagonists in question ...

The attitudes toward women reflected in the figures of Olympia, Antonia and Giulietta are not unproblematic from today's point of view: we have a doll, an artist who is not allowed to express herself, and a courtesan – in other words, a whore. The three women in the tales are, as Hoffmann informs his listeners, all contained within the “real” woman of the framework story, i.e. Stella, with whom Hoffmann still seems to be in love, despite their separation. Structurally, Olympia, Antonia and Giulietta are pure projections by Hoffmann, a fantasy of the author. Still, it is important to me to give these women – or this one woman – an independent life, not merely presenting them as projections.

The idea that Olympia, Antonia and Giulietta are partial aspects of Stella is also conveyed by the fact that all these roles are to be embodied by one single singer – a stipulation the Salzburg Festival, unlike many other productions, will adhere to. The second great quadruple role of the opera is Lindorf, with his counterparts in the three tales. Who are these so-called “villains”?

I have the feeling that we speak too quickly and too often of “villains”, who are basically embodiments of the devil. In my considerations about this staging, these figures formed a point of departure inasmuch as I noticed that their functions in the three tales are very different ones. Coppélius in the Olympia act and Dr. Miracle in the Antonia act don't really work against Hoffmann, but really against Olympia's “inventor” Spalanzani, resp. against Antonia and her father Crespel. Hoffmann is something like collateral damage; he suffers, but the “evil” is not directed against him – a fact I consider very important. In the Giulietta act, on the other hand, we have a Faustian pact between Giulietta and Dapertutto, whose goal is to rob Hoffmann of his mirror image, i.e. his soul. The situation is quite different from those in the two preceding acts, and what Hoffmann experiences seems like a paranoid exaggeration. It was not least the detailed examination of the roles the so-called “villains”

play in the tales which showed me a way for the different acts to also be staged in different ways.

What do you feel about the music Offenbach wrote for *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*?

Hoffmann is a piece I grew up with – as a Frenchwoman, I sang the song of Klein-Zack even as a child! To me, the fascinating and also difficult thing about this opera is that it is so diverse, even heterogeneous; this is true of its music and its dramaturgy. On the one hand, the music – as is always the case with Offenbach – has this incredible lightness, in the best sense of the meaning. I have staged several Offenbach pieces and love his music, especially the fact that humour is built into the music itself: this is musical, not just dramaturgical humour. *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* are also special because their dramatic intensity is much stronger than Offenbach's well-known operettas. Thus, we have enormous diversity in the music: witty and light, but also very profound, moving and highly dramatic. One of the challenges when performing this opera is giving each of these many aspects its due.



Director Mariame Clément and set and costume designer Julia Hansen during a meeting regarding the sets in the Salzburg Festival workshops.

“In *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, which he wrote for the Opéra-Comique in Paris, Offenbach saw his chance to teach all those who had pigeon-holed him as a mere composer of operettas a lesson. He had written stage works in almost every genre. The stylistic diversity of his final *opéra fantastique* is fascinating.”

Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880)

LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN

Opéra fantastique in five acts, first performed in 1881

Libretto by Jules Barbier based on the *Drame fantastique* by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré
In French, with German and English surtitles

Marc Minkowski Conductor
Mariame Clément Director
Julia Hansen Sets and Costumes
Paule Constable Lighting
Étienne Guiol Video
Gail Skrela Choreography
Christian Arseni Dramaturge

Benjamin Bernheim Hoffmann
Kathryn Lewek Stella / Olympia / Antonia / Giulietta
Christian Van Horn Lindorf / Coppélius / Le docteur Miracle / Dapertutto
Kate Lindsey La Muse / Nicklausse
Marc Mauillon Andrès / Cochenille / Frantz / Pitichinaccio
Géraldine Chauvet La Voix de la Mère
Michael Laurenz Spalanzani
Jérôme Varnier Crespel / Maître Luther
Philippe-Nicolas Martin Hermann / Peter Schlémil
Paco Garcia Nathanaël
et al.
Concert Association of the Vienna State Opera Chorus
Jörn Hinnerk Andresen Chorus Master
Vienna Philharmonic

New production

Premiere on 13 August, followed by five further performances through 30 August 2024

Großes Festspielhaus

Generously supported by the Friends of the Salzburg Festival (Freunde der Salzburger Festspiele) e.V. Bad Reichenhall



Biography:

After studying literature and art history at the École Normale Supérieure in her hometown of Paris, Mariame Clément first moved to the USA, then to Berlin.

The first production she directed, *Il Signor Bruschino/Gianni Schicchi*, took her to Lausanne in 2004. Since this debut, she has worked in Athens (*Le Comte Ory*), Tel Aviv (*Il Viaggio a Reims*), Santiago de Chile (*Lulu*), Nürnberg (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Essen (*Le Grand Macabre, Salome*), Strasbourg (*La Belle Hélène, Werther, Platée, Der Rosenkavalier, La Calisto*), Antwerp/Ghent (*Giasone, Agrippina, Armida*), Graz (*Faust, Die Zauberflöte*), at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna (*Castor et Pollux, The Fairy Queen*), in Glyndebourne (*Don Pasquale, Poliuto, Il Turco in Italia, Don Giovanni*), at the Opéra national de Paris (*Hänsel und Gretel, Cendrillon*), in Covent Garden (*L'Étoile*), at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (*Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*), the Semper Opera in Dresden (*The Bartered Bride*), the Teatro Real Madrid (Achille in Sciro), the Bregenz Festival (*Don Quichotte*) and the Santa Fe Opera (*Carmen*).

In 2016, her production of Wagner's *Das Liebesverbot* at the Opéra national du Rhin represented the French premiere of this work. In 2018, also in Strasbourg, she directed Offenbach's rediscovered *Barkouf*, which had not been performed since its world premiere in 1860.

In 2021, her *Anna Bolena* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève was the first part of a Donizetti trilogy which continued with *Maria Stuarda* and will end with *Roberto Devereux* in June 2024.

Her next projects will take her to Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen and Glyndebourne, among others.

Premiere of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at the Salzburg Festival: 13 August 2024.

Press photos:

<https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/en/photos/les-contes-dhoffmann-2024>

Press Office of the Salzburg Festival

<https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/en/>

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