

Press Text on the New Production of *Il trittico* by Giacomo Puccini

“Quiet is always more difficult than loud”



Left to right: **Christof Loy** Director, **Franz Welser-Möst** Conductor © SF/Birgit Probst

Two debuts are associated with this year's premiere of Giacomo Puccini's *Il trittico* in Salzburg: never before has this work been performed at the Festival, and director Christof Loy and conductor Franz Welser-Möst are working together for the first time.

“This collaboration with Christof Loy will not be our last,” Franz Welser-Möst emphasized right at the beginning. Musically, after his last two operas in Salzburg, *Salome* and *Elektra*, he can see the similarities between Puccini and Strauss. Both composers hew closely to the text, and the relationship between word and note is very important in both cases – it is true musical theatre, confronting the conductor with technical challenges. “*Gianni Schicchi* has numerous pitfalls, but on the other hand, the incredible orchestral language and the immense expressive palette, from sweeping sound-swells to chamber music passages, are fascinating,” he said about the different facets of the work.

Asked about the order of the three acts, which was chosen by Christof Loy and represents a departure from the typical sequence, and whether this might have to do with Asmik Grigorian as a performer, the director explained: *Suor Angelica* is often omitted, yet it is precisely this work which subsequently impressed him most. Therefore, his goal is to rehabilitate Puccini, often underrated as a composer, and particularly *Suor Angelica*. Indeed, placing *Suor Angelica* last also has to do with Asmik Grigorian, he said: “It seemed logical to us to end the evening with an effective monologue.” The wide-spread tradition of closing with *Gianni Schicchi*, in his opinion, has to do with experiences of Greek satyr plays. The order chosen in Salzburg, on the other hand, offers an opportunity to depict catharsis and a path to paradise.

Franz Welser-Möst pointed out that all three pieces highlight different aspects of Puccini. To him, the whole is not an opera in three acts, but three different pieces. “It demonstrates how accurate Christof Loy’s theatrical instinct is. Between *Gianni Schicchi* and *Suor Angelica*, there is a huge distance, and the decision to reverse the order has very quickly proven the right one.”



Left to right: **Christof Loy** Director, **Franz Welser-Möst** Conductor © SF/Birgit Probst

His own relationship with Puccini has occasionally been complicated, and he has had to reflect upon it many times, Christof Loy admitted. “Puccini provides a lot of instruction, for example with regard to timing and action. His works do not make sense without a certain kind of sets and costumes,” he said.

As a self-confessed minimalist, he has felt somewhat limited in his imagination by Puccini’s demands for certain visual characteristics. In principle, he finds it fascinating how precisely Puccini portrays people. This also applies to the musical spaces, where much takes place in a quiet realm. “Puccini’s precise demands of singers and figures are like a jigsaw puzzle, so to speak, and there are many liberties to be discovered in assembling it.”

Franz Welser-Möst agreed: putting together the whole picture, unlocking it as a total work of art, gives him great joy every day, working with a wonderful team portraying a total of more than thirty roles. And even though the Vienna Philharmonic last played the work approximately thirty years ago at the Vienna State Opera, he added that the first orchestra rehearsal made it clear why this is the best opera orchestra in the world. The important thing in Puccini is coming straight to the point, he said: “In *Il tabarro*, you must hit the atmosphere from the very first note. It begins with a triple *piano* – and quiet is always more difficult than loud.” Rapid changes in atmosphere are musically challenging, and Welser-Möst calls Puccini a grand master of compression.

Loy pointed out that working with an artist such as Asmik Grigorian is enormously helpful, as he has known her since 2014 and enjoys a close bond of trust with her. Their joint artistic search goes as far as exchanging messages after rehearsals. “She is an extraordinary personality, always wringing the maximum from each situation; her portrayals of the three

roles are totally different. That makes it easy to plumb emotional depths in a differentiated way." Her style of singing and acting is an inspiration to everyone, in Christof Loy's opinion. "She manages to develop an instinct for the theatrical which never seems artificial."

The director and conductor were not only full of praise for their joint work. Franz Welser-Möst said that the greatest surprise for him was Christof Loy's almost "merciless accuracy", adding that his notion of discipline converges perfectly with his own principles. Loy also emphasized how much he enjoys working in Salzburg: "In artistic matters, one never has to compromise here."

Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924) - IL TRITICO

Three one-act operas (1918)

GIANNI SCHICCHI

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano after an episode from the first part (Inferno) of Dante Alighieri's Divina Commedia (1321)

IL TABARRO

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami after the play La Houppe (1910) by Didier

SUOR ANGELICA

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

New production

The podcast is available here:

<https://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/presse/podcasts>

Premiere: 29 July, 6 pm, Großes Festspielhaus

Further performances: 5, 9, 13, 18 and 21 August 2022

TV Broadcast: ORF2 on 13 August at 10:05 pm

Streaming: ARTE Concert on 13 August at 6:30 pm

Radio Broadcast: Ö1 on 29 July at 6 pm

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

Kind regards,

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