

Press Text: Terrace Talk *Don Giovanni*

“Redemption within Perdition”



From left: Davide Luciano (*Don Giovanni*), Romeo Castellucci (director) © SF/Neumayr/Leo

(SF, 17 July 2024) Romeo Castellucci first directed a production at the Salzburg Festival in 2018, Richard Strauss' *Salome*. In 2021, this was followed by Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and in 2022 by Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Orff's *De temporum fine comoedia* on the Felsenreitschule stage. This summer, the Großes Festspielhaus will see the revival of his *Don Giovanni*. Castellucci said he was very grateful to Artistic Director Markus Hinterhäuser for the opportunity to restage this production, and that it was a rare chance to direct the same opera twice – as he also did in the case of *Salome*. “In the same way, one always discovers new elements in Mozart's music,” he said. To him, *Don Giovanni* resembles an ocean: it has so many facets that one can work on it all one's life. He explained that he had changed some elements vis-à-vis 2021, also fine-tuning formal aspects. The changes, however, are not particularly substantial, so audiences should not expect a completely different *Don Giovanni*. Castellucci does not see many parallels with the character of Jedermann, who is also driven by strong inner compulsions: “Perhaps the two share the elements of guilt, punishment and redemption. *Don Giovanni*, however, is different in that he seeks destruction. He knows that perdition offers him release, and his final ‘No’ makes him a modern personality. His ‘No’ and his perdition are a liberation for him, they make him a free man.” The cultural and historical background of the Enlightenment with its focus on the human being is different from the case of *Jedermann*.

Davide Luciano made his Salzburg debut in the title role of *Don Giovanni* in Castellucci's 2021 production. He too emphasized his appreciation for the privilege of returning to Salzburg for a second turn, and for the familial, friendly working atmosphere he has found here. Asked what fascinates him personally about Mozart's music, he said: “It is difficult to pinpoint one concrete level. The adjective ‘unique’ fits rather well. Mozart's music is visionary and new, and the impressive thing about it is the multitude of coexisting characteristics: the elements of the

comical, the dramatic and dark, the supernatural and the abstract – all that fits perfectly together. The special characteristic of the music is its ability to evoke images on stage, but also to speak to people's emotions. Every measure, every phrase is honest.“

Luciano has been familiar with the work and its characters, having sung different roles in it since 2013, starting with Leporello. Asked whether his personal view has changed since then, he said: “A certain quantity of experience is important for any artist. Having sung Leporello eleven years ago is an advantage, because I learned the role in very close conjunction with the character of Don Giovanni. That helped me interpret the latter, because it enabled me to discover new facets. Today, my perspective is more complex, and I have matured. I have been able to refine my interpretation of the character, getting closer to its core. That has also been made easier by working with Romeo, since our views of the work are very similar.”



Director Romeo Castellucci © SF/Neumayr/Leo

Romeo Castellucci considers uniting the roles of director, stage, costume and lighting designer in one person the natural consequence of considering the stage as one unit. Questioned about the use of images and symbols in his work, he declared: “On the one hand, the point is to communicate things; on the other, sometimes it's to hide things. This results in a kind of game with the audience, which must also work in its own way and realize certain things. One needs interaction; the audience must also contribute and add the missing elements. The word ‘symbol’ has many layers of meaning. Originally, it indicates a unification of things, and thus the opposite of the diabolical, that which divides. Don Giovanni is diabolical in this sense, but not by his nature. He is not malicious, his personality is compelled towards destruction – like a child overcoming communication barriers in this manner. This leads to an intimacy with the viewer that requires no words.”

Davide Luciano described the musical collaboration with Teodor Currentzis: “Right now, I am getting to know him even better than in 2021. He has a great artistic personality with lots of charisma, and is a human being with whom artistic work is a pleasant experience. Communicating with him is easy, and his comprehensive musical education is impressive: he is a great connoisseur of voices and one of the few conductors who are really well-versed in

vocal technique. That allows us to work with even greater precision during our very intense rehearsals. With Teodor, there is always a concrete connection with the theatrical element.”

Castellucci also commented on the female figures in his concept: “The female roles are reflected in the character of Don Giovanni and his childhood. There are three types of women: Donna Anna is the object of his desire. Donna Elvira is the opposite: she encounters Don Giovanni for the second time – something that he dislikes, for he is afraid of other people who stand for society with its rules, and also for family and order. At the same time, Donna Elvira is one of the few honest characters in this opera. Zerlina represents the physical, the instinctive. The fact that Don Giovanni seeks out women in a totally excessive way might be because he is lacking one woman, one who is essential from a psychoanalytical point of view: his mother. On this matter, the book on Don Giovanni by Pierre Jean Jouve, a friend of Bruno Walter, impressed me greatly, influencing my interpretation in important ways.”



Davide Luciano (Don Giovanni) © SF/Neumayr/Leo

Asked how he prepares for the role of the destructive, driven character of Don Giovanni, Davide Luciano said: “First and foremost, an artist must find himself when interpreting a role. Romeo’s Don Giovanni allowed me to process elements of my own past – elements we all carry within us. You will find a lot of myself and my own past in the role. For that reason, it was not hard for me to imagine myself in the role, with all its complexity.” He added that for aspects that cannot be found in one’s own biography, one must always find one’s own path.