



LA FENICE

notiziario di informazione musicale e avvenimenti culturali

PRESS RELEASE

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***Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven is to open the 2021-2022 Season**

***Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven** is to open the 2021-2022 Opera and Ballet Season of Fondazione Teatro La Fenice on 20 November 2021. Beethoven was probably the composer who suffered the most cancellations in the 2020 theatre programmes since it was none other than the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his death, precisely when the sanitary emergency was at its peak. As a result, more than any other opera it is *Fidelio* that represents freedom and liberation. *Fidelio* will go on stage with a new production by the Venetian Opera House, with direction by Joan Anton Rechi, sets by Gabriel Insignares, costumes by Sebastian Ellrich and light design by Fabio Baretin. The musical direction will be entrusted to the hands of the Korean maestro Myung-Whun Chung, who will conduct the Orchestra and Choir of Teatro La Fenice, and a prestigious cast that includes Ian Koziara (Florestan), Tilmann Rönnebeck (Rocco) and Tamara Wilson (Leonore) in the main roles. Chung will also be holding the baton for the opening of the Symphonic Season that opens just a few days after *Fidelio*, with the Ninth Symphony by the German composer.

Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio* is based on a libretto by Joseph Sonnleithner and Georg Friedrich Treitschke, drawing on Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's *Léonore*. There are three versions: the first was composed in 1804-5, is in three acts and debuted in 1805 in a Vienna that was occupied by French troops. The third and final version is in two acts and goes back to 1814 and premiered at the Kärntnertortheater. This is the version that will be performed, together with Overture no. 3 in C major, opus 72b, *Leonore*, created for the second version of the score. *Fidelio* will be staged at Teatro La Fenice on 20, 23, 25, 27, and 30 November 2021. The première on 20 November at 19.00 will be broadcast live on Rai Radio3.

It was Joseph von Sonnleithner, the neo-secretary of the court theatre in Vienna who made the proposal to Beethoven; he also wrote the first draft of the libretto, which followed a piece put to music by Pierre Gaveaux in 1798: *Léonore, ou L'amour coniugal*, by the French playwright Jean-Nicolas Bouilly who in *Mémoires* was to claim that it was based on a real episode during the years of Terror. Whether real or made-up, Bouilly's *pièce* was part of the French post-revolutionary genre of *opéra à sauvetage*, the typical plot of which foresaw the rescue *in extremis* of an innocent, virtuous victim who was destined to die at the hands of a heinous, sadistic tyrant. At that time, a genre of that kind had strong political, almost chronicle-like values, and had a definite impact on the public. This juxtaposition (perhaps slightly oversimplified) of the simple and virtuous humble, and unjust, unprincipled powerful figures, was an obvious sign of the times.

Beethoven worked on *Fidelio* (although he actually preferred the female *Leonore* but accepted the male title in order to avoid homonymy) from 1803 to 1805 and came up against quite a few problems. After changes and cuts were made following his friends' suggestions, the opera

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finally debuted on 20 November at Theater an der Wien, to an audience of Napoleonic officers who booed it. More changes were made, and it returned to the same stage in March 1806, but this time with the title *Leonore*, where it met with lukewarm success. The score ended up in a drawer where it remained until the spring of 1814, when it was subjected to its final revision, this time together with the poet Georg Friedrich Treitschke.

In the 1814 version, the composer developed the ‘high’ element of the plot, benefitting extensively from his own inclination to grandeur and drawing on the appropriate means from his creative experience in symphony composition: it contributed substantially to the language of sounds in the final act, to the evocative strength of episodes such as the recitative introducing Leonore’s aria, or the ecstatic frenzy of the cabaletta that concludes Florestan’s aria with the vision of his beloved. When it comes down to it, the sonoral strengthening was both the joint cause and effect of the metamorphosis of *Fidelio* from its original chronicle-style plot into a dimension of symbolic and tragic breadth.

Fidelio will be staged with an outstanding cast made up of the tenor Ian Koziara (Florestan), the bass Tilmann Rönnebeck (Rocco) and the soprano Tamara Wilson (Leonore). The minister Don Fernando will be played by Bongani Justice Kubheka, the governor Don Pizarro by Oliver Zwarg, Merzelline by Ekaterina Bakanova, and Jaquino by Leonardo Cortellazzi.

Intesa Sanpaolo is the main sponsor. The performance is being staged with the support of the Freundeskreis des Teatro la Fenice. The dates of the performances are as follows: Saturday 20 November 2021, 19.00 (season ticket holders A), Tuesday 23 November, 19.00 (season ticket holders D), Thursday 25 November, 19.00 (season ticket holders E), Saturday 27 November, 15.30 (season ticket holders C), Tuesday 30 November, 19.00 (season ticket holders B)

For more information visit www.teatrolafenice.it.