



2010-2011 OPERA SEASON

LEGGENDA

The world premiere of Alessandro Solbiati's opera, with stage direction by Stefano Poda

Teatro Carignano, Tuesday 20 September 2011 at 8 pm

Tuesday 20 September at 8 pm at Teatro Carignano *Leggenda* by Alessandro Solbiati, the new commission by the Teatro Regio, will have its world première. The opera concludes the 2010-11 Season of the Regio and is also included in the playbill of MITO SettembreMusica. The new staging (direction, sets, costumes and choreography) is by **Stefano Poda**, the visionary and refined director of the beautiful *Thaïs* – created for the Regio in December 2008 –, on the podium of the **Orchestra** and Chorus of the **Teatro Regio** will be **Gianandrea Nosedà**, who has strongly supported and followed the composer's work from the beginning and who will also be involved in the performances of the complete *Symphonies* of Beethoven.

The libretto, written by the same Solbiati, is dedicated to the memory of maestro Roberto Bosio, the director of the Regio's artistic area who died prematurely in August 2009. *Leggenda* is based on *The Grand Inquisitor*, a chapter from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*; the protagonists are: tenor **Mark Milhofer** (Ivan), soprano **Alda Caiello** (Alyosha), bass-baritone **Urban Malmberg** (the Grand Inquisitor), soprano **Laura Catrani** (a mother), bass **Gianluca Buratto** (the Spirit of Non-Existence) and **Tomaso Santinon** (Jesus Christ).

Alessandro Solbiati, born in Busto Arsizio in 1956, received his diploma from the Milan Conservatory; winner of numerous international competitions, he is particularly devoted to composing for orchestra and chamber music groups. His debut in opera took place in 2009 with *Il carro e i canti*, staged in Trieste. Talking about his latest work, he says that the challenge has been «to express on stage, as in the music, the three narrative levels found in the chapter of the novel: the dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha, the dialogue that takes place in Seville between the Inquisitor and his subject, and the confrontation in the desert between Christ and the devil. All three are present on stage and they interweave». Ivan and Alyosha are already on stage with the curtain up and Ivan, after having recounted certain terrible cases of crimes against children, tells his brother that he has made up a story and he wants to tell it to him. Ivan's point of departure is: if God exists, why is there such terrible evil in the world? The second level of the opera – temporal and visual – then appears: a square in the city of Seville, in the sixteenth century, where the frenzied activity of the crowd is interrupted by the appearance of a man: the alleged Christ, returned to earth. A mother asks him to bring her daughter back, and Christ – motionless and silent – restores the child to life. When the Inquisitor appears, everything gets dark, the crowd disappears and the scene changes: we are in the prison and the Inquisitor and Christ confront each other. Christ is silent, and it will be the music that speaks for him, while the Inquisitor's questions will be expressed by a vocal sextet. When the Inquisitor begins to recall the temptations of the devil in the desert, the third level of the opera opens. In the desert of evangelic temptations a new pair of characters - the Spirit of Non - Existence and the silent Christ - become the protagonists on stage; together with them Ivan and Alyosha and the two orchestras, the chorus and the vocal sextet also converse. When he has concluded his accusations, the Inquisitor sentences Christ to death. Christ's reaction is to approach his accuser, embrace him and kiss him. **Poda** explains: «The kiss

and Christ's exit from the scene are in themselves an enigma, the question behind which the secret of the relationship of Man and God is hidden [...] The kiss of Christ, symmetrical and contrary to Judas', is not absolution but the suspension of punishment».

Alessandro Solbiati explains: «Having reached and surpassed the age of fifty, I felt the need to express strongly my *Weltanschauung*, to stage my very critical point of view against the direction of western society towards colourful and stupid superficiality, towards the bypassing of profound and real questions of existence, all of this the prelude to the obfuscation of the conscience and its control. [...] The Inquisitor is the exact incarnation of power in its most alarming and unfortunately most contemporary form, [...] power that subtly deceives and annuls the conscience and reaches its peak in leading one to believe that the leveling off of thought is for the good of mankind [...]. It's very difficult to free oneself of that power because it blurs the very notion of freedom, obliterating all awareness. [...] Here (in *Leggenda*, unlike my earlier operas: *X Elegia*, *Festino in tempo di peste*, *Il carro e i canti*), an invincible, moving alternative exists, and it isn't necessary to be a believer to be moved: the "imprisoned alleged Christ's" silent final embrace of the Inquisitor, of the one who has just condemned Him to death once again because He is guilty of having raised mankind to the supreme dignity of freedom, or rather the contrast between the supreme, invincible and indisputable value of Love and the terrifying and bitter cynicism of the Inquisitor, that embrace is a definitive response and seals in me the course that has led me in almost twenty years from *X Elegia* to *Il carro e i canti* and finally to *Leggenda*». And **Stefano Poda** adds: «the voice of the Grand Inquisitor can be heard as a universal reflection regarding everything in the present, without moralistic boundaries. The staging of *Leggenda*, therefore, cannot provide answers, explain, or demonstrate. Everyone recognizes what he already carries within himself».

The cast of *Leggenda* envisages both returning artists and those making their debuts: in the role of Ivan Karamazov **Mark Milhofer**, one of the most versatile tenors of his generation who returns to the Regio after his successful appearance as Bob Boles in *Peter Grimes*. Protagonist in 2009 for *Il sopravvissuto di Varsavia* conducted by maestro Nosedà, returning to the stage of the Regio is bass-baritone **Urban Malmberg** who lends his voice to the central role of the opera, the Grand Inquisitor. **Alda Caiello**, the versatile and refined soprano of exceptional expressive capacity, making her one of the most important interpreters on the European scene, debuts at the Regio in the role of Alyosha Karamazov. Another debut at the Regio for bass **Gianluca Buratto** in the role of the Spirit of Non – Existence and another return for soprano **Laura Catrani** as the mother; finally **Tomaso Santinon** performs the role of Jesus Christ.

Leading the chorus, as usual, is maestro **Claudio Fenoglio**.

Leggenda will be recorded by **Rai-Radio3** and presented to the public by **Michele Dall'Ongaro** in *Incontro con l'Opera* to take place in the **Auditorium Rai** Wednesday **14 September** at **5.30 pm**. Repeat performances will take place Saturday 24 September at 8 pm and Tuesday 27 September at 8 pm.

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