



TEATRO
REGIO
TORINO

2023–2024 OPERA AND BALLET SEASON

Der fliegende Holländer

(The Flying Dutchman)

**Nathalie Stutzmann takes the podium,
after her triumph at the Beyreuth Festival**
Sacrifice and redemption in Richard Wagner's opera classic

Teatro Regio, 17–26 May 2024

Der fliegende Holländer (*The Flying Dutchman*) marks the return to the programme of a Richard Wagner title, under the baton of conductor extraordinaire **Nathalie Stutzmann**, conducting the Teatro Regio **Orchestra, Chorus** and **Maghini Choir**. The show will run from **Friday 17th to Sunday 26th May**, featuring the oneiric, spellbinding production of **Willy Decker**. The Teatro Regio **Chorus** will be led, as customary, by **Ulisse Trabacchin**. Starring American baritone **Brian Mulligan** in the title role, who lends his rich, secure and refined voice to the Dutchman, South African soprano **Johanni von Oostrum** as Senta and American tenor **Robert Watson** as the huntsman Erik. Also appearing in the cast: **Gidon Saks** (Daland), **Anneli Peebo** (Mary) and **Krystian Adam** (Daland's steersman).

Nathalie Stutzmann, who delighted audiences at the Teatro Regio with the concert conducted last November, will be returning to the Beyreuth Festival this summer after her spectacular debut last year with *Tannhäuser*, which earned her a resounding standing ovation as well the prestigious **Oper! Award 2024 for Best Orchestra Conductor**. After a successful career as a contralto voice, Stutzmann's charisma, energy, determination and extraordinary interpretative talent has thrust her into the world spotlight as an acclaimed orchestra director. As Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, she is only the second woman in history to lead a major American orchestra. She is also Principal Guest Conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Stutzmann is considered one of the most important musical personalities of our time. Her more recent collaborations include the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris and the London Symphony Orchestra. Her repertoire ranges from Mittel-European and Russian Romanticism—Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Mahler, Bruckner and Strauss—to 19th-century French repertoire and Impressionism. In the words of Sir Simon Rattle: "So much love, intensity and sheer technique. We need more conductors like her."

This production by director **Willy Decker**, originally created for the Paris Opera in 2000, returns to the Teatro Regio after its staging here in 2012. It plays on absences and suggestions, with just a few elements on stage (ropes, chairs), along with a gigantic white door, marking the boundary between different dimensions. The essentialism is highly evocative. As the director himself explained in an interview after the first staging of the production: "Just as it is impossible to show the real sea, in all its boundlessness, in a theatre, a real ship cannot be brought on stage. The Dutchman has to remain an image, a tale, a ballad [...]. The storm that rages in Wagner's music cannot be shown on stage, if not in the individual characters." An essential aesthetic similarly distinguishes the sets and costumes by **Wolfgang Gussmann**, with lighting design by **Hans Tölstede**.

The Flying Dutchman is considered Wagner's first mature musical drama. Although the influence of the French *grand-opéra* can still clearly be seen, the opera features various new elements that foreshadow his later works, including the first leitmotifs associated with characters and themes and a tendency to merge the opera numbers—still distinguishable—into longer, continuous scenes, especially where the episodes are of an otherworldly

nature. While elements of the French style are clearly seen in the more spectacular aspects of the opera and the crowd scenes, Wagner also incorporated elements of the Italian tradition.

In the summer of 1839, with numerous creditors at his heels, Wagner set sail for London aboard the merchant ship *Thetis*. It was a journey hindered by storms and high seas, but rich in interesting sounds and impressions. In his 1870 autobiography *Mein Leben*, Wagner relates how the calls of the sailors as they lowered the sails during a storm over the Norwegian fjords gave him the initial inspiration for *The Flying Dutchman*. While the autobiographical story is believed to be true only in part, all agree on his literary source, Heinrich Heine's novel *The Memoirs of Mister von Schnabelewopski*, on which Wagner drew freely, identifying with the accursed and tormented Dutchman and introducing two key themes of his poetics: the curse and redemption through a woman. Wagner initially conceived the work for it to be performed at the Paris Opera, though, being a young and largely unknown composer at the time, he realistically proposed a libretto for an opera in only one act. The storyline was accepted, but it was assigned to another composer, Pierre-Louis Dietsch, who wrote *Le Vaisseau Fantôme*. Disappointed, Wagner reworked the opera into three acts, changing the setting and the names of the characters to propose it to the Dresden opera house, where it premiered on stage in 1843.

To underscore the legendary dimension of the story, Wagner chose to set his opera in an unspecified time. The opera opens with strong nautical overtones, on the North Sea coast, where a storm has brought ashore two very different characters. One is a frank and naive Norwegian sea captain, Daland; the other is a deathly pale Dutchman, in command of a ship laden with treasure, but with a spectral aspect to it. The Dutchman, having sworn against God, is cursed to roam the seas forever without rest—only the love of a woman who is true to him can release him from his curse. The two men cross paths and when the Dutchman learns that Daland has an unmarried daughter, he offers him his treasures in exchange for her hand in marriage. The captain accepts and leads him to the young Senta. Daland's daughter is betrothed to Erik, but her intuition tells her she is destined for another—for the man at the centre of a grim legend that has captured her heart. As soon as Senta and the Dutchman meet, the two realize they are destined for one another, but Erik steps in to prevent their union, following the girl to remind her of her previous engagement. Seeing them together, the Dutchman despairs and doubts of Senta's faithfulness. He breaks off their engagement, revealing his true identity, till then unknown to all. The girl understands her presentiment was right—that the man is the accursed Dutchman of legend and that she is the woman destined to save him. As the Dutchman sets sail, Senta throws herself into the sea, declaring she will be faithful until death. Her sacrifice is not in vain, as the ghostly ship sinks into the depths, releasing the Dutchman from his eternal damnation.

The Under30 Preview will be staged on **Wednesday, 15 May** at 8p.m.

The opera will be presented on **Wednesday 8 May** at the **Piccolo Regio Puccini** at **18p.m.**, with free admission to the conference-concert led by **Susanna Franchi**.

BOX OFFICE AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *The Flying Dutchman* are on sale at the Teatro Regio Box Office and online at www.teatroregio.torino.it

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Opening hours: Monday–Saturday, **11a.m. to 7p.m.**; Sunday, **10:30a.m. to 3:30p.m.**;

one hour before show times

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Turin, 19 April 2024

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