

BRONX



In memoriam

Dutch National Opera Academy

A collaboration with the Residentie Orkest

La finta giardiniera

Dramma giocoso in three acts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Giuseppe Petrosellini

First performed at the Salvator Theater, Munich, 13. January 1775

First performance of this production Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe 23. October 2021

First performance of the DNOA production Conservatoriumzaal, Amare, The Hague, 28. June 2023

The Cast

Don Anchise <i>the Podestà (Mayor) of Lagonero</i> <i>in love with Sandrina</i>	Marcelo Alexandre	
Marchioness Violante Onesti (Sandrina) <i>disguised as a gardener</i>	Samantha Faina Hannah Gries	28.06 & 01.07 29.06 & 02.07
Arminda, niece of Don Anchise, <i>engaged to Belfiore, formerly in love with Ramiro</i>	Sterre Decru	
Contino Belfiore <i>engaged to Arminda</i>	Hugo Kampschreur Theodor Uggla	28.06 & 01.07 29.06 & 02.07
Cavalier Ramiro <i>Arminda's rejected suitor</i>	Rommie Rochell	
Serpetta the Podestà's <i>servant, in love with the Podestà</i>	Sharon Tadmor	
Roberto (Nardo) <i>Violante's servant, disguised as a gardener</i>	Fabian Homburg Filips Krauklis	28.06 & 02.07 29.06 & 01.07
Wolfi <i>an artist</i>	Theodor Uggla Hugo Kampschreur	28.06 & 01.07 29.06 & 02.07
Amadé <i>an artist</i>	Filips Krauklis Fabian Homburg	28.06 & 02.07 29.06 & 01.07

Duration ca. two hours and thirty minutes with one twenty-minute interval

*The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment in the auditorium are forbidden.
Members of the audience are requested to turn off all mobile phones and digital alarms.*

Creative Team

Chloe Rooke *conductor*

Anja Kühnhold *director*

Anna Sophia Blersch *set & costume design*

Jasper Nijholt *lighting design*

Stephan Steinmetz *dramaturg Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe*

Sets, props and costume construction by the workshops of the
Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe

Production Credits

Rodrigo Lluch *assistant conductor*

Valentina di Taranto *language coaching*

Peter Nilsson *continuo*

Christina Domnick | Marta Liebana *repetiteurs*

Alexandra Kaptein | Pau Hernandez *student pianists*

Angela Poulima *stage manager* | **Sanne Stroeven | Ingeborg Tenk** *interns*

Astrid Vreeken *hair & makeup*

Nathalie Alink *wardrobe manager* | **Tba** *wardrobe assistant*

Maddalena Deichmann *production manager*

Thomas Braun *technical producer & Head carpenter*

Joep de Jong *Royal Conservatoire The Hague technical producer*

Tom van Hoff | Maarten Spaans | Bart Vilex *Royal Conservatoire The Hague technical team*

Bob Walraven | Jelle van Setten *lighting board operator* | **Lars Huijgen** *lighting technician*

Matthias Konnecny *surtitles coordinator* | **Simon Heerze** *surtitles operator*

Reinout Bos *production photography* | **Bart Voorbergen** *production videos*

A garden for Kenneth

An Appreciation by Hannah Gries, DNOA Masters I

*Pure light of mind, and tenderness of heart;
Genius, and wisdom; the gay social sense,
By decency chastised; goodness and wit,
In seldom-meeting harmony combine;*

James Thomson – *The Seasons*

La finta giardiniera – The gardener in disguise. A production originating at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe is being re-staged by their wonderful directing team – Anja Kühnhold and Anna Sophia Blersch – to be brought on stage by the members of DNOA and the Residentie Orkest under the musical direction of Chloe Rooke.

A gentle and charming production full of depth, finesse, and care for details. Colourful, glamorous but in no way ever pretentious. Poetic and meaningful, delightful, and sensitive.

A garden, almost tailored to the spirit of Maestro Kenneth Montgomery.

As a Young Artist Programme, we get to learn from many different and brilliant professionals from the music industry. Every one of them can have an impact on us. They can influence the kind of artist we may become in the future, on how we approach the music, the art, the libretto.... And then a few of those professionals may leave traces that continuously touch our heart when remembering what they gave us. We had the privilege of exploring Haydn's *L'isola disabitata* under the guidance and mentorship of Maestro Kenneth Montgomery. Everyone who ever worked with him can never forget his magic, kindness, knowledge and love for people and the music!!!

Kenneth Montgomery was a true icon in the classical music world. Working with him meant an unforgettable experience to all of us. We knew before: we were about to work with one of the greatest. We knew it was big. We were nervous, excited, well-prepared, and ready to dive into rehearsal. The Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century led by Maestro Montgomery....that already meant a lot to us!

We certainly did not know what he would leave us with once we finished the project.

The first thing I will always remember about Kenneth was his genuine and deep love for what he did. It was astonishing how his smile could light up even a windowless grey painted Theaterzaal within seconds. Once he lifted his hands to begin the music, it was clear to each of us that we were invited into something magical.



Kenneth Montgomery – January 2023 © Reinout Bos



Kenneth Montgomery with Benjamin Wenzelberg – January 2023 © Reinout Bos

He encouraged us to be truthful to the music, the characters and to ourselves just like what he always aimed for himself. He took his musical achievements and high reputation so modestly. He needed us to commit to the island that Haydn created as much as he did. He shared his love, doubts, and admiration for the piece with us at all times, thus setting the ground for us to join his vision. He encouraged us to serve the art in the way that the music can speak its most beautiful language. He had a deep desire for the fidelity of what the composer wished for.

The excitement with which he approached the music was so contagious because none of what he created seemed strategic. All of what he brought to us seemed to stem from his shining, truthful, curious and sparkling personality, and with this he had the great gift of bringing out the best in each artist involved.

Now, knowing we were part of his last performance fills my heart with sadness and gratitude at the same time. That a man who has performed all over the world and had done so much could enter a rehearsal room every day filled with genuine curiosity is truly remarkable. As he said once: "There is so much out there. I am constantly surprised at how little I know and yet how much I have done."

I remember the first time I was requested (as each of us was) to come to his house for a working session. Prepared as much as possible, I arrived expecting to be judged on my singing. I ended up hardly singing more than half a page. We had the most exhilarating and interesting conversation about the world, society, history and so much more. Talking to my colleagues I came to learn that it was his approach with all of us in this session. He was able to set the path for a rehearsal period with this by inspiring us to learn as much as possible, so we can bring the music to life and keep it spontaneous at all times. What a wonderful, empowering, and strong mentor he was. As his assistant in the production, Benjamin Perry Wenzelberg, now a close and dear colleague and friend of DNOA and Montgomery student, said himself that Kenneth approached music through a "scenic" route of cultural history and anecdotes, passed down through generations about the human beings that created and performed such pieces before.

"I will never forget his generosity of knowledge, but – equally 'importantly' – of spirit".

It was incredible to see him transition from rehearsals with us in Amsterdam to then standing in front of the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, in many ways, "his" orchestra. The way he merged into his orchestra's sound and what he created with his hands, his heart and soul and his charm was magical. There he was, doing what obviously gave him an honest sensation of joy and appreciation for the world and therefore his artistry was real and intelligent. Not the least bit was it pretentious or artificial.

He gave us a little note of general instructions for his approach to the music. Samantha Faina (soprano DNOA) still has that, and it brings up such dear memories for her. When she sees it, she remembers his convivial nature. His honesty, his directness and his kindness were unparalleled. An admirer of community, in life and music, he gave us a sense of treating what we do with care, joy and curiosity.

His way of connecting with the music and connecting the music to us singers was magical. As the mezzo Maria Warenberg said so accurately: "The performances we have done were so special and I will always treasure them."

To quote Marcelo Alexandre: "He always made sure to share his knowledge and that we truly understood what he wanted. He wanted everyone to be in their best form and therefore took the responsibility to be the one creating the environment for that."

"While I mourn Kenneth's passing, I am so grateful that I had four years of a shared path where his kindness, friendship, insatiable curiosity, capacity for joy and uncompromising dedication to music have been a true inspiration. I will miss him more than I can say." – Paul McNamara (Artistic leader DNOA).

When I was sitting in his living room, we also spoke about Haydn's composition of *Die Jahreszeiten*. The poem that is underlying the composition is "The Seasons" by James Thomson. I had never read any of the poems in English and had only heard the German oratorio until Kenneth gave me the book recommending me to read it. After I had read about half of it, I wanted to return the book as the production had finished. He said "keep it, I have another one. Are you enjoying it?"

Now, as I am writing, I ended up reading "summer":

*Pure light of mind, and tenderness of heart;
Genius, and wisdom; the gay social sense,
By decency chastised; goodness and wit,
In seldom-meeting harmony combine;*

As a musical mentor for *La finta giardiniera*, DNOA's current production conducted by former Montgomery student Chloe Rooke, he was invited to be a supervisor and share his knowledge and wisdom with all of us involved.

Chloe Rooke certainly brings part of his musical approach to the production, and we can see his handwriting adding to her artistry throughout her work. She says she can imagine what he would have said to the singers and the orchestra. "There are so many things I wish I could ask him."

Chloe having been under the influence of his mentorship, got such clear ideas about how to approach the highly complex recitatives of Mozart, the accompagnato recits and the ensembles. "He gave such a valuable framework to us students."

The plan was for him to also prepare the work together with Chloe starting in spring. Sadly, he passed away before they could even meet again. But him being the person he was, he had already started preparing the score for their work, the score from which Chloe is now working: "I will be using his score for the performances that are partly filled with his notes, his prep-work and his handwriting".

His spirit is with us on and behind the stage and on the conductor's podium. He remained a working musician to the end of his life, and he managed to bring his guidance to the production of *La finta giardiniera* even after his passing.

We all share such wonderful memories of him, and he gave us an experience that surely had a long-lasting influence on our lives on both the artistic and human level. Therefore, our production of Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* is dedicated to Maestro Montgomery. This means remembering, admiring, laughing and crying for his wonderful spirit.

This colourful, elegant, and glamorous garden of music is for you, dear Kenneth!

"Mozart will never die." – Kenneth Montgomery



Kenneth Montgomery with Chloe Rooke – October 2021

Residentie Orkest

Pieter van Loenen *Concert Master*

Francisca Portugal | Orges Caku | Yuki Hayakashi | Momoko Noguchi *violin I*

Justyna Briefjes | Barbara Krimmel | Ben Legebeke | Abel Rodriguez Garcia *violin II*

Jacomine Punt | Jan Buizer | Tanja Trede *viola*

Gideon den Herder | Sven Weyens *cello*

Jos Tieman *contrabass*

Martine van der Loo *flute*

Juan Esteban Mendoza | Hilje van der Vliet *oboe*

Simon Vandenbroecke *bassoon*

Ron Schaaper | Mirjam Steinmann *horn*

tba* *timpani* | Peter Nilsson *fortepiano*

*student of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam

Residentie Orkest The Hague

The Residentie Orkest is the orchestra of, for and from The Hague. It has firm links with the city and its inhabitants. It also plays a strong role in supporting The Hague's wider profile as seat of government, home to the royal family and city of peace and justice as well as a centre of diplomacy, a first-rate place to live, a business hub and a city with a socially committed heart. The orchestra actively uses classical music to connect and stimulate all residents and visitors based on four pillars: symphonic, education, talent development and outreach. It aims to make a valuable contribution towards an inclusive, inspiring, collaborative and multi-faceted city.



DNOA Mozart Gala with Residentie Orkest – January 2021 © Reinout Bos

The orchestra offers a top-quality musical experience with an adventurous profile and dynamic zeal. It challenges, surprises and provides enjoyment and always looks to approach its music in a fresh, contemporary and youthful way. From summer 2021 the orchestra is located in the new concert hall Amare in the centre of The Hague. The Residentie Orkest can also be heard frequently at locations such as the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, TivoliVredenburg in Utrecht and De Doelen in Rotterdam. In addition, special crossover concerts and other innovative productions are performed in The Hague's prominent pop venue Paard.

The Residentie Orkest is also part of many prolific collaborations with a wide range of partners, including Pieterskerk in Leiden, the Dutch National Theatre, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, NTR Saturday Matinee and the Dutch National Opera. In recent seasons, the orchestra has played in a highly acclaimed production of Messiaen's rarely performed opera *Saint François d'Assise* as well as in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Puccini's *La bohème* and *Madama Butterfly*, Verdi's *Nabucco* and the world premiere of *Ritratto* by Willem Jeths.

A rich history

Since its first concert in 1904, the Residentie Orkest has developed into one of the most prominent symphony orchestras in the Netherlands. Founded by Dr Henri Viotta, who was also its first chief conductor, it soon attracted composers such as Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, Max Reger, Maurice Ravel, Paul Hindemith and Vincent d'Indy. Guest conductors have included Arturo Toscanini, George Szell, Bruno Walter, Leonard Bernstein and Hans Knappertsbusch. After World War II, Willem van Otterloo was appointed chief conductor. He led the orchestra from 1949 to 1973 and built a strong reputation by combining high-quality performances with adventurous programming. Van Otterloo was succeeded by Jean Martinon, Ferdinand Leitner, Hans Vonk, Evgenii Svetlanov, Jaap van Zweden, Neeme Järvi and Nicholas Collon.

The orchestra has built up a rich discography with labels such as BIS, Chandos, Challenge and DGG. The Residentie Orkest can also be heard frequently in many major concert halls across the world. Its various tours have included New York, Boston, Chicago, London and Vienna and the orchestra has also performed in Japan, China, Germany, France and South America.

Conductors

Since summer 2021 Anja Bihlmaier is the new chief conductor of the Residentie Orkest. Richard Egarr and Jun Märkl are both principal guest conductors.

The Synopsis

ACT I

Much to the annoyance of his jealous housekeeper Serpetta, Don Anchise, Podestà (mayor) of Lagonero, is smitten with his new gardener Sandrina. However, Sandrina is really the Marchioness Violante in disguise, searching for her lover Belfiore, who a year ago stabbed her in a fit of jealousy and, believing her dead, subsequently fled. Posing as Nardo, Sandrina's faithful servant Roberto is working as the Podestà's manservant. He has fallen for Serpetta.

In the meantime, Arminda, the Podestà's niece, has spurned her admirer Ramiro for a new, aristocratic suitor. To Sandrina's dismay, it transpires that this new suitor is none other than her lover, Count Belfiore. Upon arrival, Belfiore realises that Sandrina is in reality Violante, but she refuses to admit her true identity. Arminda realising that all is not right, worries that she might lose Belfiore to Sandrina. This in turn gives Ramiro hope that he might win back Arminda.

ACT II

After dismissing Ramiro, Arminda confronts Belfiore about Sandrina, while Nardo woos Serpetta in vain. Sandrina continues to deny that she is Violante and goes so far as to tell Belfiore that she witnessed the marchioness's death. When Ramiro produces an arrest warrant accusing Belfiore of murder, Sandrina finally confesses the truth. But left alone with Belfiore, she claims that her admission was merely a ruse to save him from arrest, and his confusion drives him to increasing despair.

Her marriage to Belfiore threatened, Arminda has Sandrina abducted and abandoned to die in the nearby forest. Nardo discovers what Arminda has done and leaves to search for Sandrina, followed by the others. As night falls over the woods, a terrified Sandrina takes shelter in a cave. The searchers arrive in separate groups, unbeknownst to each other, and in the darkness identities are mistaken and chaos ensues. Unable to cope with their tortured and confused feelings for each other, Belfiore and Sandrina retreat into madness as the others watch in horror.

ACT III

The Podestà longs for an end to the madness and wants common sense to prevail again but that is not easy.

Sandrina and Belfiore awaken at dawn, their senses restored, and decide that they must never part.

And all the others... ?



Hannah Gries *Sandrina* | Fabian Homburg *Nardo*



Hugo Kampschreur *Belfiore* | Fabian Homburg *Nardo*



Sharon Tadmor *Serpetta*
Filips Krauklis *Nardo*



Rommie Rochell *Ramiro*
Hugo Kampschreur *Belfiore*



Hugo Kampschreur *Belfiore* | Sharon Tadmor *Serpetta*

With Mozart in the Garden

Falling between the established early operas *Idomeneo* (1781) and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) and the lesser-known earlier works such as *Mitridate* (1770) and *Lucio Silla* (1772), *La finta giardiniera* can be seen as a kind of “stepchild” among Mozart’s operas. A *dramma giocoso* (comic drama) with a convoluted plot, there are twenty-eight musical numbers, several solo-arias and two grand finales. Arriving in Munich from Italy, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was already known at the age of nineteen to a large audience. With several successful opera seria to his name, his work had already received widespread recognition.

La finta giardiniera was premiered in 1775 at the

court of the art-loving Bavarian Duke Maximilian III Joseph (“Joseph the beloved”).



Still life by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (1573 – 1621)

Traditionally there were two operas performed for the carnival in Munich – an opera buffa (comic) and an opera seria (serious). Mozart had been hired to compose an opera buffa using an already exiting libretto – *La finta giardiniera* by the Italian librettist Giuseppe Petrosellini. Written originally for the composer Pasquale Anfossi, the first setting of the libretto had its premiere in Rome during the 1774 carnival. For the young Mozart, this new commission became a foundation for experimentation, not least as the libretto contained all aspects that would later become his trademark: characters that are rich in complexity, wide range of affects, conflicts and connections that were all led into the core of human existence – the search for love, the pursuit of happiness, comic and tragic at the same time.

Within *Finta*, one can already find the topics and elements that are characteristic of his later operas, especially in the da Ponte trilogy *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. A model of comic operas – this is where Mozart developed it.

Background history

The Marchesa Violante was stabbed and left injured in a fight by her lover Count Belfiore. He fled and has thought her dead ever since. However, Violante survived and begins a new life. As the gardener Sandrina, she works in the house of the Podestà of Lagonero, accompanied by her servant Nardo, whom she passes off as her cousin. She hopes to find Belfiore again one day. Count Belfiore, who still loves Violante, has meanwhile become engaged to Arminda, the Podestà’s niece.

Self-contained world

The plot takes place in a contained world which is typical for all Mozart operas. There are two contrasting atmospheric regions: the garden of the Podestà and the wild nature. Both correspond to day and night (order and chaos). This cosmos is populated by seven very different characters. Once the last guests have arrived in Lagonero, there is no longer an external impact. Everything takes place between the seven characters, each with very contrasting hopes and goals that are difficult to reconcile.

Act two is no exception to that conflict when the dispatch from Milan influences the plot. But this might as well just be an intrigue compiled by Ramiro. There is a lot of time in this hermetically contained world to develop the characters' depth in a broad range. Everyone is treated the same, none of them is either only good or only bad. Each one, in their own way, has the right reasons to act as they do. Everybody loves and deserves love. Each comes into their own as humans. But – and this is distinguishing for all characters in Mozart operas – there is no automatic right to happiness.

Comedy – Tragedy

In the eighteenth century the opera stage only knows to differentiate between serious (seria) and comic (buffa). However, the opera seria is defined more precisely. There is often a King or ruler who is at the centre and they are confronted with conflicts of national importance. This form represents the absolutist understanding of power. The comic opera has an incomparably greater range, from pieces that reverse the relationship of domination to stirring pieces in which even figures of lower rank suffer tragedy. *La finta giardiniera* is a piece representative of the tradition of what can best be described as "sentimental drama" typified in Niccolò Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* (1760). There you can find the gardener Ceccina, who has business with a Marquis and his sister. There is also a farmer called Sandrina. In the end the gardener reveals herself to be Baronessa.

In this manner *La finta giardiniera* also presents both bourgeois and aristocratic characters and mixes comic and tragic characters – each one is as important as the other. In addition to Violante and Belfiore there are also Arminda and Ramiro as carriers of the serious plot whereas Podestà, Serpetta and Nardo act within the comic sphere. Mozart takes each one of the characters seriously. It is thanks to Mozart that they all get an equal chance to pursue happiness and they expose themselves to the risk of either ridicule or tragedy. In this way, *La finta giardiniera* belongs to the comprehensive genre of the comedy of life with chasms – just like all the other Mozart operas.

Garden & forest

The garden is the environment in which the figures of the action move. Since the beginning of time humans have always tried to control wild nature, to turn it into their own habitat and design it to their liking. The raw nature in its original condition is hostile to peoples' needs and according to the age of Enlightenment it would be seen as unreasonable. A person of the eighteenth century wants to bring order to chaos because only a designed and tamed nature counts. That is why lanes and lines of vision are drawn throughout the woods, paths and flower beds are laid out, hedges are accurately cut, and aviaries and animal enclosures are built.

The garden becomes the symbol of culture and order. It is also a mirror for the human soul and therefore tending the garden is equal to bringing order to the soul. Only within the garden do the laws of reason prevail. But whoever dares to leave the garden sets foot into dark and unknown terrain. That is where humans are no longer in control, neither of themselves nor nature that, in this place, remains untamed: forests, rocks, caves, darkness, disorientation and wild animals. Whoever strays there no longer knows his way around and is in danger of death.

The scenery in act two changes abruptly from a garden to a forest and rock-desert. Mozart transitions seamlessly from a coquettish aria of Serpetta into the breathless and desperate singing of Sandrina who is certain that she will die on the spot. The forest is the place of loss and insanity, and the separation of the world into light and dark continues in the split title character.

Violante/ Sandrina: a split personality

The main and title role is a split personality: Violante/ Sandrina. She is two different characters in one: the Marchesa Violante Onesti who is hurt, distraught and was left behind, has chosen a new identity as a form of protection. From now on she will be the gardener Sandrina, who has nothing in common with the Marchesa. This way she can move on with her life. However, the trauma that Violante's wounds have left her with, stays. Sandrina is isolated and unhappy, starting a new and fulfilled life is not an option for her. She needs her partner for that. The first encounter happens only by calling out his name. As a result of that she faints. She loses consciousness and for a brief moment she speaks as Violante. When she regains consciousness, she finds herself in front of Belfiore, who believes he recognizes her as Violante.

Throughout the entire second act both identities of Sandrina/ Violante and Belfiore are exposed to a constant field of unresolved tension. The fact that Belfiore is charged with her murder forces Sandrina back to her identity as Violante.

It must be a very difficult decision to return to being hurt and defenceless Violante whom she declared dead in Act one. She only does this as long as it is necessary to prove Belfiore's innocence. Once that has happened, she instantly steps back into her protected and safe alter-ego Sandrina. There is no rational solution for this discord of two identities. Her only possibility to react is a completely different state of consciousness and can only lead to madness. The nocturnal setting in the second act finale is one of remarkable madness.

Madness

The mad scene in *La finta giardiniera* often causes astonishment. The audience is similarly confused by the two transported people, as are the characters around them on stage. This scene, as well as many others in this opera is both tragic and comic: tragic in the combination of a comedy of mistaken identity and drama and serious within the depth of their feelings and sense of being lost. While Sandrina suffers a deep mortal fear, the other characters experience a game of confusion in the darkness that is very embarrassing for all of them.

After a huge amount of psychological pressure, Sandrina and Belfiore escape the reality in which a solution for their problem cannot be found. Together they transition into a different sphere – a world into which no one can follow them: Greek mythology. She refers to him as Tirsi, he calls her Clori. Tirsi is a figure from the pastoral scene *Aminta* (1573) in which people, as shepherds, fight with Amor for love. Furthermore, Tirsi is a typical pastoral name and Clori is the equivalent shepherdess.

Sandrina and Belfiore imagine themselves in a miraculous idyllic setting, an unreal ideal state in which man and nature are in harmony. They listen to gentle music together, the sound of sirens and the lute of Orpheus, whose tune tames nature. When the emotions are whipped up more and more throughout the second act finale, they turn to become the dreadful persona that are Medusa, the creature with a head of snakes, and Hercules (Alcides), the invincible hero. Finally, they dance ecstatically in a dissolution of borders which is defined by harmony and joy. Bystanders can only comment, appalled – “what odd madness!” The resolution takes place in Act three when both are awakening from a cathartic sleep that leaves them not knowing where they are and how they got there. All the pain and madness seem to have fallen off their chest and both stand right there, where everything began. Sandrina can now finally become Violante again. The only thing missing for their happiness now is their commitment to one another.

Version and production

The opera consists of twenty-eight musical numbers of varied length including da capo arias, duets, extended secco recitatives with fortepiano or accompanied by the full orchestra, all of them containing both comic and serious sections. Most of the time they are aligned in a classical style, meaning the recitatives tell the story eloquently and drive the plot, whereas the arias, with few verses and rich music, highlight the affects and emotions. This manner merges into a chain of various musical sections adding more and more characters to the scene that change length, comment the plot, and the conflict ripples back and forth until finishing the first and second acts with substantial finales. The opera ends abruptly once the main conflict has been resolved.

Composing this opera also as a field for exploration, Mozart created from abundant material, which embraces also experimental characters in the solo arias, sometimes even frightening and demonic characters such as Medusa and Hercules (Alcides). "Someone who does not lose their sanity over anything, does not have that at all" – Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in *Emilia Galotti* (1771). A mad person was seen to be one beaten by God in the baroque era. There was no other explanation foreseen for abnormal behaviour at that time.

During the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century people aimed to find explanations and cures in order to define traumatic experiences as the trigger of crisis. The unresolved conflict between Violante and Belfiore is the focus. The other people do not know about this conflict and get drawn into the consequences of the events. They all act in a world they believe to be on top of whilst in the end they are nothing more than a fragment of it. A complete performance of *La finta giardiniera* would last well over three hours. In this production originating at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe (2021), it has been curtailed somewhat to focus on the main storyline. In particular, the focus here was to keep the balance of the characters towards another, where each of them has the same amount of solo arias.

In the first act the exposition has priority. The second act has more cuts in order to guide the story line to its climax and to get a rash resolution in Act three. The exceptional beauty of Mozart's music is even more accentuated in a condensed version. In the end there is, instead of the original Vivat-Choir, the ensemble piece from the beginning that conjures up the beautiful day.

Under the direction of Anja Kühnhold this piece appears in its ambiguity of comedy and tragedy. Every character has good reasons to follow their goal. Conflicts are the result of all the opposing interests. The stage designed by Anna Sophia Blersch shows the two-sided world of garden/wild nature as a still life of beauty, life and transience. The baroque stage brings elements of nature and adds these to the compilation of painted and built elements of nature. Both the characters and the plot transform throughout the opera, they change their appearance and silhouette as a consequence of the way they live out their passion.

An opera for our times

Chloe Rooke (conductor) and Anja Kühnhold (director) in discussion with Uwe Friedrich.

Mozart was just 18 years old when he wrote *La finta giardiniera* – according to conductor Chloe Rooke, no longer a child, but a young man.

“He was a little bit younger than the singers who will be singing these roles – a young man coming of age. He was really exploring different things.”

Director Anja Kühnhold also feels that the opera is not the work of a child.

“If you really look deeply into the characters, you find that so much about them is written into the music – especially the finales. Mozart was already writing in a very mature way. Some young people have experienced a lot through their love life already, and some have absolutely no experience. I think the piece tells people of every age something about life and about love. It isn't just a piece for young people.”

In many ways, says Kühnhold, *Finta* remains a very modern opera.

“A lot of it is about power games, and insecurities, and of course about love. It's about the pain of the characters, but also about the process of becoming an adult. It's about reflecting and growing through experiences, making decisions, and perhaps finding out that the thing you thought you wanted is in fact not right for you – which can also be a painful process.”

Kühnhold's production was initially made for the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, with an experienced ensemble of singers. Reimagining it with the Dutch National Opera Academy is, she says, a chance to look at the production from a new perspective.

“Approaching this with younger, less-experienced singers means you look at the thing in a completely different way. You need to dig deeper into each of the characters, because you need to explain more. The process is more open, and we explore more together; the young singers bring their own energy to the characters. Where a role is double cast, you can bring aspects of both singers into the creation of this character, so it becomes theirs. The process is one of fun and joy, exploring the production with completely new eyes. You learn a lot yourself – it's really giving and taking.”

Rooke also enjoys the sense of discovery that the young cast members bring.

"The singers are finding things within themselves, discovering parts of themselves that they might not have known. We see all the phases of love from a kind of blind date all the way to a relationship that went terribly wrong.

"Mozart plays with the music for each of these characters, and you can really hear the difference between the writing for each of them. As the plot develops, you see how he supports the coalescing of different love stories with a change in the music for different characters – not just that they have come closer together, but also that their music becomes more similar. By the end he has coupled them up in the way that their music is written, too."

Watching Kühnhold develop the production's characters with the young cast feeds back, in turn, says Rooke, to the way she approaches the score's details.

"Mozart wrote so cleverly, bringing back different themes and even different tempo markings later. You can really see his narrative writing in his choice of tempi as we go from beginning to end. Musically, the orchestration is also a very interesting aspect. He uses a very classical orchestra – strings, keyboard, then oboes and horns, but then also the addition of extra instruments – timpani, flutes as well – it seems almost lavish. I guess the orchestra he was working with in Munich was willing to support that, and it's just enormous fun. Just the different colours used throughout are one of the most beautiful things about the opera.



Chloe Rooke Conductor © Reinout Bos



Anja Kühnhold *Director*

"Even at the very beginning of the opera, in the introduction, every character is talking about their own circumstances, and in just one number, we had eight different kinds of emotions and characters. If the orchestra can find so many different colours and articulations in one number, it's kind of brilliant."

Just as Kühnhold's work with characterisation informs Rooke's approach to orchestral colour, so Rooke's work with the score feeds back into Kühnhold's staging.

"For me, it's very important to connect what people are doing on stage to what is written in the music," she says. "Because there is always a reason for repetition; there is a reason why the music suddenly changes – whether it's the tempo, the rhythm, the key – it all belongs together. The music is not something imposed onto a character. It grows out of the characters – it's what they feel, what they are in that moment, and it changes because they are what they are. For me, it's important to read the layer of text, to read the layer of music, and to bring this together in what they are doing on stage."

"You can hear everything and feel everything. Sometimes you need to support it. You might also decide to go against that, but you need to sit with the music, and to speak with the conductor, too."

"With recitatives, you need to work together. It's a very close collaboration with the singers, just to create the tension that leads from recitative to aria. Even silence has a strong meaning; so the challenge is to give all these things a reason and a physicality. The translation of the body language of the singers is the key to directing for me."

"I think recitatives are one of the most fun bits," agrees Rooke. "It's really drama through singing. Understanding how we can work together in terms of pace, and also the vocal colour that the singers can use on certain words to bring or release emphasis."

La finta giardiniera is, as both Kühnhold and Rooke see it, neither a tragic opera ("everyone survives!") nor strictly speaking a comedy; at the same time, it is both. "It occupies a middle ground," says Rooke, "as Rossini would later in some of his operas, like *Cenerentola* – these operas were straddling the line. It depends a little on how you view the characters. If we see something similar in ourselves it's not so funny, but it makes us laugh – an uncomfortable kind of humour, a really emotionally complex mix."

For this and many other reasons, Kühnhold says, *La finta giardiniera* remains very much an opera for our times.

"Each of the characters sticks very much to their own dreams, hopes, and wishes, and really clings to them with all the energy they have. That makes it very close to us; we do very much follow our own dreams and wishes."

"Mozart is always playing with his characters, and these human emotions still trigger us. There is nothing old-fashioned about it. We are still playing with our feelings through this music. It's centuries later, but it still connects us."



Haydn *L'isola disabitata* – January 2023 © Reinout Bos

About DNOA

A partnership of the **Conservatorium van Amsterdam** and the **Royal Conservatoire The Hague**, the Dutch National Opera Academy is a two-year master's programme offering a wide-ranging curriculum encompassing all aspects in the training of an aspiring opera artist. In addition to a focus on refining technical skills, students are supported in developing a very clear sense of vocal and artistic identity, and how these attributes can best be united to meet market demands and expectations. The programme is tailored so as to enable young artists to enhance chances of success in a competitive field as they transition from full-time education to the workplace. DNOA graduates can be found in many of the world's leading opera houses. The programme mounts several full-scale productions each season and enjoys close ties with the wider world of opera.

For more information, please visit www.opera-academy.nl

"The DNOA is the Champions League in Arts education. It provides a unique and supportive environment for ambitious singers wanting to cross the gap between education and the international stage."

Gerben van der Werf counter-tenor – graduate 2021

DNOA 2023/2024

Conrad Susa

Transformations

An entertainment in two acts from the book of Anne Sexton

Sam Weller *conductor* & **Rennik-Jan Neggens** *director*

Conservatoriumzaal, Amare, The Hague | 7, 8, 10, 11. February 2024

Rossini

L'occasione fa il ladro

Burletta per musica

Benjamin Wenzelberg *conductor* & **Daniel van Klaveren** *director*

Bredeweg Festival, Amsterdam | 26 April 2024

Monteverdi/ Elena Kats-Chernin

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

Tragedy with a happy end in one prologue and three acts

A collaboration with **Residentie Orkest**

Karel Deseure *conductor* & **Mart van Berckel** *director*

Conservatoriumzaal, Amare, The Hague | 26, 28, 30 June 2024

About the performers & Creative team

For more details about the current DNOA singers please see :
opera-academy.nl/our-students/

Chloe Rooke *conductor*

Chloe Rooke is Assistant Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra for the season 2022/23. She won the Contemporary Award at the first International Conducting Competition in Rotterdam in May 2022 and the Audience Prize at the Donatella Flick-LSO Conducting Competition in 2021. She also attracted attention as the youngest competitor of the 2021 Malko Competition: "Many will leave Copenhagen with memories of Chloe Rooke, the young British conductor who lit the competition up with her sense of music's joy and communicative potential" – Andrew Mellor, Gramophone.

Last season Chloe conducted the London Symphony Orchestra twice at the Barbican in family concerts and made her debut with the BBC Concert Orchestra conducting several world premieres by young British composers, invited back for a concert at Saffron Hall in January 2023. Having conducted *Così fan tutte* for the DNOA at Bredeweg Festival in April 2022, she went on to assist at the Glyndebourne Festival on Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, having already assisted on *Die Zauberflöte* in Nancy and with Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Opera Rouen.

Her new position as Assistant Conductor at the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic (supporting their Chief Conductor Karina Canellakis, in addition to John Adams and Sir James MacMillan among others), follows upon two years of postgraduate study on the Dutch National Master in Orchestral Conducting, where she was mentored by Jac Van Steen, Kenneth Montgomery, Ed Spanjaard and Antony Hermus. Prior to that she studied under Sian Edwards at the Royal Academy in London, where she was awarded the Ernst Read Conducting prize and Fred Southall Memorial prize and an MA in Orchestral Conducting (Distinction).

Passionate about music's role in bringing social transformation, Chloe was recently announced as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of Street Orchestra Live (the UK's first street orchestra), her association dating back to 2019. SOL holds the mantra 'Music for everyone, anywhere', touring each year to parts of England with limited access to the arts. Each performance exudes the ensemble's core ethos: to share the joy of music in the every-day and invite unassuming passers-by to join in the party for a moment in time.

Chloe began her conducting journey with a passion to bring people together to forge meaningful relationships and powerful performances, initially working with student and amateur orchestras at Oxford (where she graduated with first class honours in 2018) and in London.

Anja Kühnhold *director*

A seasoned director, assistant director and stage manager, Anja Kühnhold completed her degree in Stage Direction at the HfM Hanns Eisler Berlin. Ms. Kühnhold worked as an assistant director, stage manager, and in the artistic operations office for the Berlin State Opera, in addition to other companies during her course of study. From the season 2010/11, Ms. Kühnhold worked as the assistant director at the Staatstheater Mainz, and in 2013 during Wagner's bicentennial year, she coordinated operations between Oper Leipzig and the Bayreuth Festival, before returning to the Staatstheater Mainz as the artistic production manager.

Since the 2016/2017 season, Ms. Kühnhold has been the head staff director at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, directing, overseeing house productions, and revivals. In addition, she is regularly a guest director and assistant director on productions around the world.

In 2016, she collaborated with Keith Warner on a production of *Elektra* at the Prague State Opera, which she successfully revived at the San Francisco Opera in 2017, and the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe in 2019. She also worked as the associate director for *Siegfried* in the Royal Opera Covent Garden's Ring Cycle (2018). At the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Ms. Kühnhold directed various operas and excerpts, including Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* (2021), the prologue to Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2021), a children's opera *Gold!* (2018), and Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* (2021).

As an assistant director, Ms. Kühnhold has worked with Tobias Kratzer on various productions, including *Edgar* (2018) in St. Gallen, *Tannhäuser* (2019) at the Bayreuth Festival, and *Fidelio* (2020) at the Royal Opera House. She also revived Kratzer's *Tannhäuser* at the Bayreuth Festival to much acclaim.

In addition to Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* for the DNOA 2023, productions this season include *L'elisir d'amore* at the Pfalztheater Kaiserslautern and *La traviata* at the opera festival in Glatt. She is also creating a staged song recital with singers from the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, featuring songs from the 1920s.

Anna Sophia Blersch *set & costume design*

Anna Sophia Blersch first trained as a dressmaker and then studied stage and costume design at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. After her studies, she worked as costume and stage design assistant at the Salzburg Festival and the DNT Weimar.

From 2000 to 2002 she was a designer at the Theatre Heidelberg.

Since 2002 she has been working as a freelance stage and costume designer. She designed numerous costumes and stage designs, for example for *Carmen* at the Mecklenburg State Theatre Schwerin, *Uncle Vanya* and *Goldberg Variations* at the Darmstadt State Theatre, *The Imaginary Sick* at the Erfurt Theatre, *La finta giardiniera* at the Badische State Theatre. Since 2015 she has been part of the team of Barock am Main Frankfurt and designed and realised costumes and stage for the Hessian Molière.

Jasper Nijholt *lighting design*

Jasper Nijholt is a passionate lighting designer who graduated from the Amsterdam University of the Arts. His passion for lighting started early on. In the past years Jasper has developed his portfolio to both national and international productions. He has worked on a large variety of projects, ranging from opera to museums to stage artists. Due to his experiences with different genres he brings a fresh look along with innovative ideas. In cooperation with a creative team, he creates lighting designs that add an extra dimension to a project.

In the Netherlands Jasper made lighting designs for the Dutch National Opera, Theater Alliantie, Opera2day, MORE Theaterproducties, Toneelmakerij, Froukje, Son Mieux, amongst others. For the Dutch National Opera Academy Jasper created the lighting designs for *Postcard from Morocco* directed by Robert Chevara and the Triple Bill *L'isola disabitata* directed by Michiel Dijkema. Internationally he participated as Associate Lighting Designer in the production of several musicals in Teatr Roma Warsaw, including *Aida*. For the opera productions *King Roger* and *Die tote Stadt* in Teatr Wielki, Jasper was part of the lighting design team as Assistant Lighting Designer.

Rodrigo Lluch *assistant conductor*

Rodrigo Lluch is currently working towards his Bachelor's in Choral Conducting at The Hague Royal Conservatory with Jos Vermunt, and Wind Band Conducting with Alex Schillings. He graduated with a Master's in Baroque Violin with Luca Giardini at the Conservatory Bruno Maderna in Cesena, Italy.

The Honourable Congress of the State of BCS (Mexico) awarded him the State Youth Prize. Rodrigo studied his Bachelor's Degree in violin with Professor Cuauhtémoc Rivera at the Escuela Superior de Música del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Institute for Fine Arts). In Mexico he played in various ensembles, like the Baroque ensemble "Kairós", in violin and piano duos and with "El taller de la memoria", a contemporary chamber orchestra he created alongside his partner, Areli Cortés.

In pursuance of his conducting career, he has taken classes with Dr. Sebastián Cohen (Argentina). Also, he has conducted the Baja California Sur Symphony Orchestra, "El taller de la memoria" and recently he assisted Leonard Know with the Atheneum Kamerorkest.

Rodrigo Lluch has participated as a soloist with the Symphony Orchestra of the Escuela Superior de Música, Symphonic Orchestra of Cordoba, "El taller de la memoria", Philharmonic Orchestra of the Arts (recorded the Four Seasons of Vivaldi) and BCS Symphony Orchestra.



Rodrigo Lluch *assistant conductor* © Reinout Bos

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Programme Credits

Interview with Chloe Rooke and Anja Kühnhold – Uwe Friedrich & Shirley Apthorp

“A Garden for Kenneth” – an appreciation by Hannah Gries (soprano – DNOA Masters I)

“In the Garden with Mozart” – original article written for the Badisches Staatsoper Karlsruhe by Stephan Steinmetz, translated, and adapted for this programme by Hannah Gries.

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Editor – *Paula Best*

Rehearsal & production photos © *Reinout Bos*

