

SILVIA HRONCOVÁ

Director of the National Theatre Opera and State Opera

**We cordially invite you to *Un ballo in maschera* at the National Theatre: masks, games of love and hate, dances of cabals and Verdi's immortal music**

**Prague, 2 October 2017**

**Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Un ballo in maschera*, a drama replete with political machinations, passion, love and betrayal, is about to return to the National Theatre after nearly half a century. The new production will receive its premiere on 5 October (the second performance will be on 7 October) 2017, conducted by Jaroslav Kyzlink, the music director of the National Theatre Opera, directed by Dominik Beney, with the sets and costumes designed by Marek Cpin.**

**The lead characters, entangled in a love triangle, will be portrayed by Peter Berger and Michal Lehotský (Gustav III), Anda-Louise Bogza, Veronika Dzhioeva and Maria Kobielska (Amelia), and Svatopluk Sem and Michele Kalmandy (Renato). The coloratura part of Oscar will be performed by Marie Fajtová and Yukiko Kinjo, the role of Ulrica the fortune-teller by Veronika Hajnová and Eliška Weissová.**

The most recent National Theatre production of the opera *Un Ballo in maschera* was staged five decades ago, says Jaroslav Kyzlink, the music director of the National Theatre Opera. Yet the long break is just one of the reasons we have decided to include the piece in our programme plan. The other reasons are Verdi's renown, the opera's high quality and the splendid opportunities it affords the singers; the expected popularity on the part of the audience, as well as a certain context, or the dramaturgic line pursued by the National Theatre Opera, with its objective being not only to nurture the Czech and Slavonic musical legacy, but also to build up a company capable of performing the entire spectrum of the opera repertoire.

The opera's title itself evokes in me buoyant merry-making and revelry. Yet pretence and hypocrisy lead to a spine-chilling drama, points out Dominik Benez, who had previously directed the National Theatre productions of the operas *The Nightingale* and *Iolanta*. Harboring mystery and enhancing imagination, the story actually represents a masked ball, whereby for various reasons the society and the individual characters act insincerely, feigning something, wearing masks, Benez adds.

The libretto is based on a real historical event, the assassination of Gustav III, King of Sweden, in 1792. But when creating the sets and costumes, I was more inspired by the epoch in which Verdi composed the opera, that is, the second half of the 19th century, a time abounding in elegance, theatricality, with the ladies having been quite

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feminine. That period does not come across as archaic as the Rococo era,+ the designer Marek Cpin says. %We did not want to update the opera at any cost; our aim was to present a timeless, modern spectacle. The major and decisive element is the masked ball itself, the opera's finale, yet each of the lead characters now and then sports a mask throughout the story.+

*The next new National Theatre opera production in the current season will be of Orson Ÿt dro ģ Don Hrabal, which will receive its world premiere on 14 December 2017.*

*Opera lovers can also look forward to the special Beethoven-Berg-Wagner concert, scheduled to be held on 16 November 2017 at the Forum Karlín. The evening will include the complete Act 1 of Richard Wagner's Die Walküre, featuring Andreas Schager (Siegmund), a world-known Wagnerian tenor, Meagan Miller (Sieglinde), a brilliant American soprano and Peter Mikuláz (Hunding). The State Opera Orchestra will be conducted by Andreas Sebastian Weiser, the music director of the State Opera. The programme will also include Ludwig van Beethoven's Leonore Overture No. 1, Op. 138, and Alban Berg's Violin Concerto, to be performed by Lidia Baich, a young and glamorous Austrian violinist.*

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