

Premiere

DIE ERSTEN MENSCHEN (THE FIRST PEOPLE)

Opera in two acts by Rudi Stephan

Libretto by Otto Borngräber

Sung in German with German and English surtitles

Conductor: Sebastian Weigle

Director: Tobias Kratzer

Set and Costume Designer: Rainer Sellmaier

Lighting Designer: Joachim Klein

Video: Manuel Braun

Dramaturgy: Bettina Bartz, Konrad Kuhn

Adahm: Andreas Bauer Kanabas

Chawa: Ambur Braid

Kajin: Iain MacNeil

Chabel: Ian Koziara

Oper Frankfurt Extras

Frankfurt Opern und Museumsorchester

With generous support from the Frankfurt Patronatsverein – Sektion Oper

Rudi Stephan (1887-1915) completed *Die ersten Menschen (The First People)* in 1914, but the World Premiere didn't take place until 1920, five years after the composer died fighting at the front. A distinctive voice had been silenced before it could develop the promise evident in his works. Music critic Paul Bekker wrote: „A new language emerges here of unexpected tonal profusion, whose idiosyncrasies, even if disconcerting at first, nevertheless bear the stamp of being inspired, not contrived.“ Like Franz Schreker, some of whose operas were performed between the wars in Frankfurt for the first time too, Rudi Stephan remained true to tonality while exploring the sounds a large orchestra can generate in a completely new way. The surging waves of almost symphonic music is extremely expressive, intensifying the erotic tension in the text – based on a play by Otto Borngräber, which was banned not long after its World Premiere in 1912 – to a new level, revealing the mastery of a genuine operatic composer. It's about discovering an almost forgotten, very exciting work.

The first people have been thrown out of Paradise and trying to cope in the world they now live in: Chawa remembers, wistfully, how much Adahm desired her in the springtime of their love. But Adahm's tired and totally preoccupied by their struggle for existence. His son Kajin, refusing to struggle „by the sweat of his brow“, has given in to his longings and is prowling through the wilderness in search of a woman. Chabel seeks „Salvation“ by worshipping a benevolent God, to whom he sacrifices. Both crave their mother in different ways. When Kajin surprises Chawa and Chabel at night in ecstatic union, he kills his brother. He sees a vision of the future: presaging „bloodshed to come, the future of mankind“.

This New Production rounds off **Sebastian Weigle's** 15 years as General Music Director of Oper Frankfurt, during which the works of Richard Strauss and Richard Wagner were closest to his heart. He recently conducted a New Production of *Elektra* here and *Tannhäuser* at Covent Garden and the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin. The singers are nearly all Members of Oper Frankfurt's Ensemble: latest roles here sung by **Andreas Bauer Kanabas** (Adahm) included Pogner in a new *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, a role he recently stepped in at short notice to sing at the Semperoper in Dresden. Not long ago Canadian soprano **Ambur Braid** (Chawa) enjoyed great success as Salome in Frankfurt and Toronto. Her fellow countryman **Iain MacNeil** (Kajin) recently thrilled audiences here as the Prince in Tchaikovsky's *Die Zauberin (The Sorceress)*. The only Guest is American tenor **Ian Koziara** (Chabel), back on the banks of the Main, where he sang Fritz earlier in the season in Schreker's *Der ferne Klang (The Elusive Sound)*.

Premiere: Sunday July 2nd 2023, at 18hrs in the Opera House

Further performances: July 6th, 9th (18hrs), 12th, 15th, 17th, 20th 2023

Unless otherwise stated, all performances begin at 19.30hrs

Tickets cost: € 16 to € 190 (with a 12.5% pre-booking fee when not purchased direct from the theatre)

Tickets can be obtained from the usual outlets, by telephone +49 (0)69 – 212 49 49 4 or online www.oper-frankfurt.de.

We do hope you might be able to publish this event. For further information, ordering photographs and reserving press tickets please contact Holger Engelhardt (Leitung Pressereferat) on +49 (0)69 – 212 46 727. His fax number is +49 (0)69 – 212 37 164 or you can email him on holger.engelhardt@buehnen-frankfurt.de.