

Premiere / First ever performance in Frankfurt

PARTENOPE

Opera in three acts by George Frideric Handel

Text by Silvio Stampiglia

Sung in Italian with German surtitles

Conductor: George Petrou

Director: Julia Burbach

Set Designer: Herbert Barz-Murauer

Costume Designer: Raphaela Rose

Choreography: Cameron McMillan

Lighting Designer: Joachim Klein

Dramaturge: Zsolt Horpácsy

Partenope: Jessica Niles

Rosmira: Kelsey Lauritano

Arsace: Iurii Iushkevich

Armindo: Cláudia Ribas

Emilio: Magnus Dietrich

Ormonte: Jarrett Porter

Dancers: Adrián Ros, Tommaso Bertasi, Lara Fournier,
Esmeralda Vollmer, Ariadna Llussá

Frankfurt Opern- und Museumsorchester

A crisis at the Royal Academy of Music in London was inevitable in 1728 when stars (including the castrato Senesino) unexpectedly resigned from the Italian opera company run by **George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759). No less than three singers went back to Italy, which meant that Handel was suddenly short of audiences and shareholders. The following season was cancelled because operas couldn't be fully cast. This caused opera shares to crash, so the composer and entrepreneur Handel had to leave for Italy quick to track down new crowd pullers. Thanks to his smoothly oiled network and unfailing instinct he managed to create a new ensemble for London in a few months, although the real operatic stars in those days were absent. The repertoire shouldn't just be „More of the same“ either. New works, sounds, stories and colours must be found. The libretto for *Partenope* is based on texts by the Roman poet Silvio Stampiglia, who favoured lively stories and biting comedy to moralising, gloomy plots. So Handel's tragicomedy, based on this material, caused quite a stir and, as expected, caused opera shares to rise. Only at first sight does the plot meet all the requirements for an opera seria libretto. It was probably the simplicity and sarcasm of the original text that particularly appealed to Handel: He was able to revive and loosen up the deadlocked, rigid forms of opera seria whilst transforming them into a cheeky musical comedy with (self-)ironic undertones and ridiculous twists and turns.

A love carousel circles the Queen of Naples: Partenope is being wooed by three men. She actually likes conceited Arsace best, but is also rather taken with shy Armindo. The third, Emilio, arrives with his army and orders the Queen to choose: marriage or war. The Queen's craftiness in sending Armindo and Emilio packing is worthy of a shrewd politician, but she has can't control her beloved Arsace. Partenope doesn't know that he left his fiancée Rosmira for her sake. The jilted woman appears at court disguised as Prince Eurimene, intent on winning her darling back. She humiliates unfaithful Arsace, who recognises her and no longer knows which of the two women he loves. Rosmira forces her fiancé to keep her true identity secret. Her desire for revenge makes her reveal Arsace's infidelity to Partenope. Partenope marries Armindo, offering Emilio – instead of love – her friendship. A double wedding puts an end to the chaos.

The Greek conductor **George Petrou** is Artistic Director of the International Handel Festival in Göttingen and the Armonia Atenea Orchester in Athens. He makes his debut at Oper Frankfurt with this new production. The same goes for the director: **Julia Burbach** was born in Tokyo to German parents. She gained her first experiences in direction working as an assistant to Christof Loy. She soon began directing her own productions, most recently: Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* at the National Theatre in Prague. The title role is sung by the American soprano **Jessica Niles**, making her house debut. She trained at the Juilliard School in New York and, from 2021 to 2023, was a Member of the Ensemble at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, where she now works freelance. The Russian countertenor **Iurii Iushkevich** recently made his debut in Frankfurt, singing Nireno in Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*. He and the sopranos Clara Kim and Nombulelo Yende, former Members of the Opera Studio, can be heard here in recital in December 2024. All the other roles are taken by **Members of Oper Frankfurt's Ensemble and Opera Studio**.

Premiere: Sunday November 10th 2024, at 19hrs in the Bockenheimer Depot

Further performances: November 12th, 14th, 16th, 20th, 22nd, 25th, 27th 2024

Which all begin at 19hrs.

Tickets cost: € 25 to € 80 (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.