

ACQUA GRANDA

Venezia 4 - 11 - 1966 | Venezia 4 - 11 - 2016



The City of Venice and Teatro La Fenice
are commemorating the 1966 floods with a world première at
Teatro La Fenice on 4 November 2016



Dear Friend,

Teatro La Fenice will be opening its next opera season on 4 November 2016 with **Acqua Granda**, a new Opera commissioned to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1966 floods. The events of that distant 4 November when the city was submerged will be staged.

The Opera is based on *Acqua Granda, il romanzo dell'alluvione*, a novel by Roberto Bianchin, and put to verse by the author and the poet Luigi Cerantola together with the director Damiano Michieletto.

The protagonist of the novel is a young boy from Pellestrina, Ernesto Ballarin, who experiences the disaster of that dramatic day first hand, when he was blocked inside the house with the island under water.

Together with Ernesto and the whole City of Venice, Fondazione Teatro La Fenice would like to commemorate that tragic event with **Acqua Granda**, so that the fragility of this unique city is not forgotten.

In this booklet you will find the instructions on how you may take part in the initiative.

Kind regards,

The Superintendent

Cristiano Chiarot

Ernesto Ballarin



Chiesa della Salute, 4 November 1966

ACQUA GRANDA

Preview | 4 November 2016

6 November 2016 | 8 November 2016 | 10 November 2016 | 12 November 2016

Teatro La Fenice

One-act Opera

libretto by Roberto Bianchin and Luigi Cerantola

Music

Filippo Perocco

Direction

Damiano Michieletto

Set and costumes

Paolo Fantin, Carla Teti

Conductor

Marco Angius

Teatro La Fenice Orchestra and Choir



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www.ilgiornaledelpo.it



www.comune.venezia.org

THE PROJECT

Teatro La Fenice will open its 2016/2017 opera season with **Acqua Granda**, a contemporary opera in memory of the 1966 floods, when Venice and its islands were submerged by almost two metres of water.

On the fiftieth anniversary of that dramatic event, using music and words La Fenice will retrace the events on that distant 4 November, when a disastrous combination of uninterrupted downpours and an exceptional rise in temperature caused the most serious flooding the city has ever suffered since its beginnings.



Fondazione Teatro La Fenice commissioned **Roberto Bianchin** with the project; the latter is the author of the novel that inspired the opera *Acqua Granda, il romanzo dell'alluvione*. Protagonist of the novel is an inhabitant of the island of Pellestrina, **Ernesto Ballarin**, who actually experienced the events in 1966.

The text has been modified and put to verse in the libretto written by Bianchin together with the poet **Luigi Cerantola** and the director **Damiano Michieletto**. The latter played a key role in the construction of the work and is in charge of the direction of the opera.

The music was composed by **Filippo Perocco**, one of the most important contemporary composers today.

SYNOPSIS

The island of Pellestrina, November 1966. **Fortunato** and **Nane**, two fishermen, one old and one young, are watching the sea level anxiously. Fortunato is the most worried, convinced that the water will continue to rise, while Nane thinks it will start receding at any moment.

Ernesto, Fortunato's son, appears and inform Fortunato about the decision to emigrate instead of remaining on the island and being a fisherman is because he hopes to have a better life.

Fortunato does not understand his reasoning and they have a brief argument. **Lilli**, Ernesto's young wife, understands her father-in-law's doubts and misgivings. However, she and her husband get ready to go to the market and buy some shoes for Ernesto's imminent departure. The weather seems to be getting worse and the water is still rising relentlessly.

Luciano, the pharmacist, arrives and tells Fortunato and Ernesto about the latest news he has heard on the radio: there are gales, downpours and storms all over Europe.

At midnight the water has reached one metre. The women are so worried they are unable to sleep. The tide continues to rise, flooding the island and entering the houses; in Ernesto and Fortunato's house the electricity fails.

A loud blast is heard, as if a bomb had gone off. Cester, a sergeant in the Carabinieri arrives with terrible news: a breach has opened in the dykes that have protected Pellestrina for over two hundred years.



Island of Pellestrina



Island of Pellestrina

The sea is taking over the lagoon. Gale-force winds are blowing while the water reaches the second floor of the houses. Alarm turns to terror and everyone fears for their lives. The dyke collapses once and for all in the zone of Portosecco: Cester uses a loudspeaker to tell everyone to evacuate the island. Fortunato decides to say, come what will, and Ernesto stays with him.

The water continues to rise, almost reaching the windows on the upper floors. A siren can be heard in the distance, with three blasts. The inhabitants have left Pellestrina. Cester arrives; with his three friends, they are the only ones who have not left the island. He has a white flag with him in case they need to make themselves seen to an aircraft flying overhead. The sky is black, and the sea gives no sign of receding.

However, at a certain stage, when it seems that all hope has been lost, Fortunato, the most expert of the quartet, notices a slight change: the wind has stopped. The insidious sirocco wind has stopped blowing. The sea stops rising menacingly. The water begins to fall, almost miraculously. Life has been saved and the evacuated, including Lilli and Leda return home.

Everyone celebrates: finally the great water is no longer frightening.

The destructive power and terrible strength of the water are celebrated by the **Choir, voice of the lagoon**, which opens and ends the opera, and accompanies the contrasting emotions of the protagonists with a continuous, poetic counter melody.

THE PROTAGONISTS

Damiano Michieletto, Director

He is probably one of the most important Italian directors in the last decade. A thirty-eight-year old Venetian, Damiano Michieletto graduated from the Paolo Grassi Drama School in Milan and is now sought after by the most important theatres around the world. He has designed countless prose and even more opera productions, all characterised by his innovative, bold and provocative interpretation.

Roberto Bianchin, Author & journalist

He was born in Venice, and lives in Venice, Milan and Paris. He is the artistic director at Teatro Gerolamo in Milan, the editorial director of cultural events journal *Il Ridotto*, and president of the publishing house *I Antichi Editori*. He has written for both the radio and theatre. His plays have been performed at, amongst other places, the Biennale Theatre, Gran Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Palais Royal in Paris, Deutsches Theater in Munich, Bavaria, the Berlin Kadewe, the New York Frick Museum and the Khartoum Conservatory.

Filippo Perocco, Composer

Conductor and organist, he has taken part in the 40th and 41st Ferienkurse von neue Musik in Darmstadt. He was composer in residence at the European Centre for the Arts in Dresden, at the American Academy in Rome, and visiting composer at Boston University, Tufts University, New York University and the Lugano Conservatory. He has conducted with the following: the Teatro Comunale Orchestra in Bologna, EuropaChorAkademie, United Instruments of Lucilin, Mannheimer Schlagwerk, Argento, Venice Biennale, Mata Festival, AngelicA, New Music Brandeis, Harvard University, and Northeastern University.

Luigi Cerantola, Poet

Originally from Altivole in the province of Treviso, he has been working in the field of art for years; he has written poetry, prose and plays. A university professor of Italian Language and Literature at the Imperial University of Tokyo, his most recent publications include *Le sequenze di Tokyo* and *Gli amanti di Medusa*.

Ernesto Ballarin, Protagonist of the novel

After having miraculously survived the floods, he opened a small osteria in Venice in Calle degli Assassini, preserving its original shop sign “Vini da Arturo” and transforming it into a delightful gastronomic temple that is loved by both Venetians and tourists from all over the world alike.



Ernesto Ballarin, 1958



Original sign “vini da Arturo”



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Fest srl
San Marco 4387
30124 Venezia
tel: + 39 041 786672
mail: info@festfenice.com



Teatro La Fenice di Venezia