



riccardo buscarini: opera / music



**la forza del destino
(2025)**

Giuseppe Verdi, *La Forza del Destino*. Stage direction Riccardo Buscarini, set design Giammaria Farina, costumes Mara Leonora Pieri, lighting design Moritz Zavan Stoeckle. Production Socjetà Filarmonika Leone / Teatru Aurora, Gozo, Oct

FAITH VS FATE

Directing *La Forza del Destino*

By Riccardo Buscarini

Alla promessa terra / Là cesserà la guerra
(The war will end right there, at the promised land)
Leonora, ACT IV

Exposing the dualism of war and religion, the contrast between violence and the Divine — *La Forza* makes us face a hard reflection about themes of conflict and, of course, identity.

Two invisible forces circle above this colossal opera: fate and faith. Destiny guides and torments characters: it designs and erases their path, offering no clarity to the protagonists. Living in blindness, the characters of *La Forza* are bound to escape, to be something else to survive, to hide behind a mask. Faith can be a shelter too, a defence against the flux of life.

Change — social, economic, personal — is at the core of this opera and specific production. The story is set not in 18th-century Spain, but in mid-19th-century Italy, in the heart of the Risorgimento — an era of revolution and fading empires. Like in Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, this world is one of crumbling palaces and shifting loyalties, where the nobility faces a slow extinction, and the future moves towards an uncertain new order. At the same time, humble people face poverty after a war promoted and carried forward by a certain illuminated aristocracy.

Daughter of a unloving nobleman who is against her relationship with a foreigner, Leonora is the starting point of the drama. She is a young, aristocratic woman who could initiate a revolution: she wants change, but she is not strong enough to choose it. In the first scene, full of tension, she desires, but does not act. She doubts and takes time, she cannot give herself fully — to love, to God, to life. Her non-deciding becomes

the cause of her destiny, a maze with no exit where only hiding is possible.

Desire is no weakness. Verdi taught us that desire is identity. To want something — fiercely, truly — is how we begin to know who we are. This was Verdi's path in life too. The composer built his art and helped build his country, through passion, belief, action.

In *La Forza*, destiny is not divine — it is human. It is shaped by longing, fears and hesitations. Verdi, though a man of faith, offers no miracles here. Instead, he proposes a question to us:

What happens when we lose our belief in something greater or simply in ourselves?

The visual world of this production mirrors the characters' condition. Costumes root us in the 19th century, but the set is an emotional landscape, a world that is fragile and fluid, a space of layered transparencies like a fog blurring contours. The stage is a space of wandering, a diaphragm breathing between the characters and the audience. Nothing is ever fully seen, and clarity — like truth, or the future — is always just out of reach.

A few moments before her death, Leonora pronounces some of the most complex lyrics of *La Forza del Destino*. Her words sound like an ominous and contradicting prophecy considering the current times and the year this masterpiece was composed. They make me think once more that opera is still able to talk about humanity in a very profound way. To speak of fate and faith in such dark times is no small thing. As we work on this opera, we are painfully aware that people are being killed. It is a heavy task to work on *La Forza*, and we try and take it with care, with respect, with humility. My team and I offer this work not as an answer, but as an act of listening, of "tuning in". Because in the end, perhaps the most radical thing we can do is to keep believing — in music, in meaning, in one another.

Many thanks to Socjeta Filarmonika Leone and Teatru Aurora.



Sketch by Giammaria Farina

fate can never divide us.









Sketch by Giammaria Farina

And I with you.
- Hurrah!













Oh, when shall
all my sorrows



not a sound is heard.























Il trittico (2024)

Giacomo Puccini, *Il trittico: Il tabarro, Suor Angelica, Gianni Schicchi*

Set design Mike Zerafa, costume design Luke Azzopardi, lighting design Moritz Zavan Stoeckle. Production Socjetà Filarmonika Leone / Teatru Aurora, Gozo, October 2024.

full video

On desires and displacement

directing *Il Trittico*

By Riccardo Buscarini

*La vita è fatta a scale,
C'è chi scende e c'è chi sale*

–
*Life is made of stairs,
Some people go up, some go down*
(Italian proverb)

When I was asked to direct Puccini's *Il Trittico* I imagined straight away to identify a *fil rouge* that could unify the three operas with the ambition to establish a continuity from the first title to the second and last one. My desire was to create a coherent and playful journey for the audience: it is not often we see the three operas performed in the same evening and I wanted to challenge my creative and critical mind.

Il Tabarro, *Suor Angelica*, *Gianni Schicchi* and their powerful plots and scores, I see a multifaceted, evolving fresco of contrasting emotions offering the chance for a reflection on the meaning of life. One could say in one evening the audience travels through a kaleidoscope from the Seine's dark and muddy timbres in *Il Tabarro* to the crystalline, celestial atmospheres of *Suor Angelica*, to the dynamic and humorous fast-changes of *Gianni Schicchi*...

Analysing the three operas I sense Giacomo Puccini's intention to have his characters playing in very specific landscapes conditioning them. In *Il Tabarro* Puccini depicts a small universe of poverty and fatigue by describing -better- evoking a river and the people's struggle on it. In *Suor Angelica* it is the confinement in a cloister to mark the life and mood of its nuns while in *Gianni Schicchi*, a palace and its cumbersome heritage, is the perfect context to watch fire setting among the dead uncle's greedy relatives.

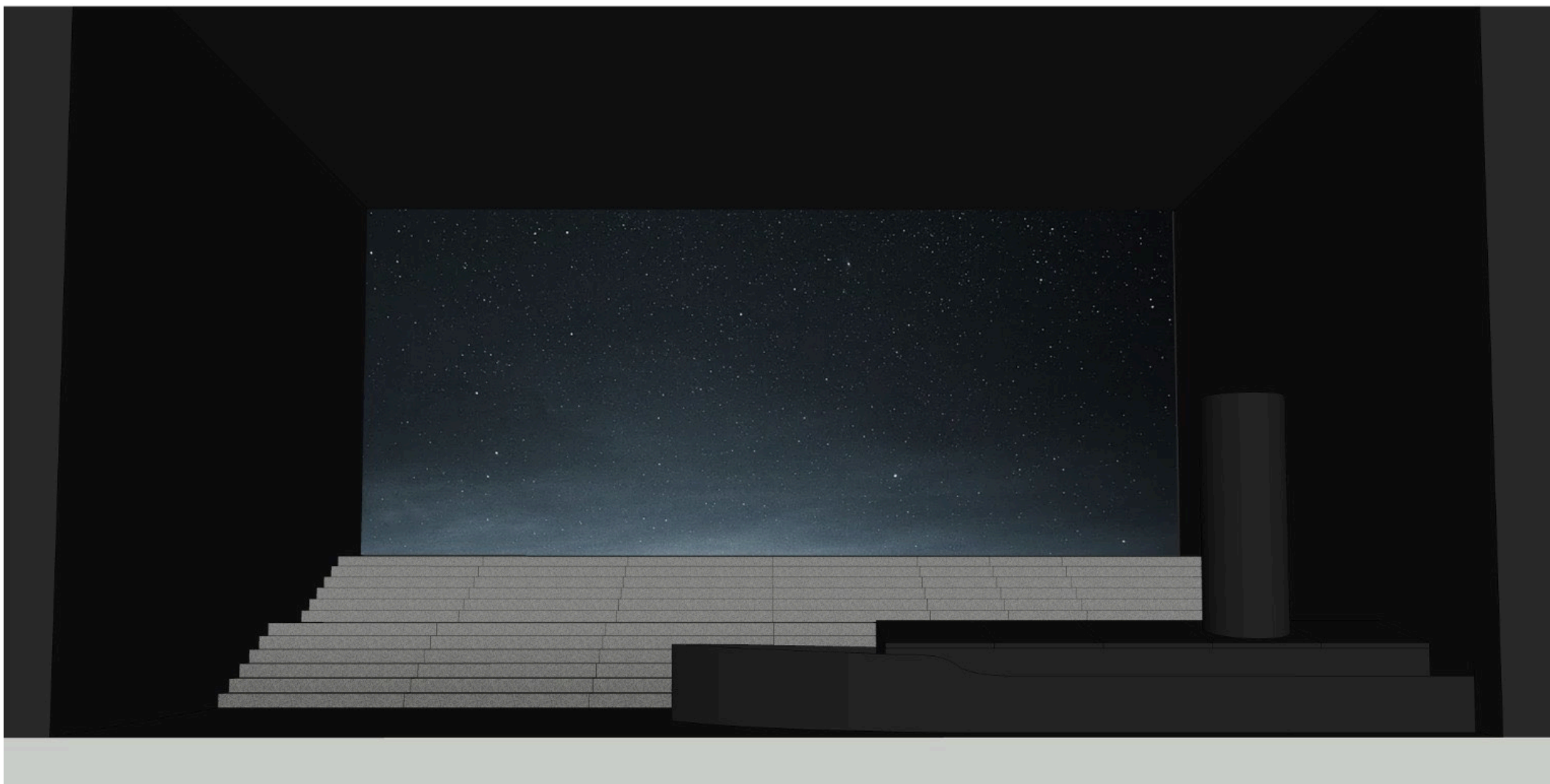
psychological space to which everyone is bound to adapt and negotiate in order to survive. Exposing treachery, jealousy, murder and then guilt, suicide and redemption, and, finally the never-ending counterposition of love and money, plus the clash between different social classes *Il Trittico* portrays an enormous spectrum of the most visceral emotions and most common human dynamics. Moreover, a comment on social status permeates the three operas. Beside *Il Tabarro*, and *Gianni Schicchi*, where this is obvious, this is also evident in *Suor Angelica*, a strong young woman who has never really forgotten her sense of belonging -both as a princess and as a mother.

Among the several themes all the operas tackle, perhaps we can identify the pursue of happiness as the very protagonist of each of them. Dreams, failures, ambitions, delusions pervade all the *Il Trittico* characters, displaced by the primary feature of human condition: precariousness.

To emphasise the character's emotions I therefore decided to set the action on a semi-fixed set made of a grand staircase gradually opening, turning, breaking, separating, reconfiguring in new shapes. In *Il Tabarro* the stairs descend to the Seine leading to Michele's ominous black boat, symbol of authority and, eventually, death and misery. In *Suor Angelica* the stairs become a salvific metaphor for redemption, the path the protagonist has to follow to save herself from social conventions. In *Gianni Schicchi* the stairs fragment in the shape of a maze, like an Escher illustration, a space everyone wants to dominate while losing their identity and eventually, in a very symbolic way, all their wealth.

Movement is the world I come from. Descent and ascension, detachment and reunion best represent this rendition's metaphorical key, both for the set and for the characters.

I feel honoured to be in charge of the stage/artistic direction of the annual opera production of Socjeta Filarmonika Leone at Teatru Aurora, a place I now can call home for both my creativity and my person.



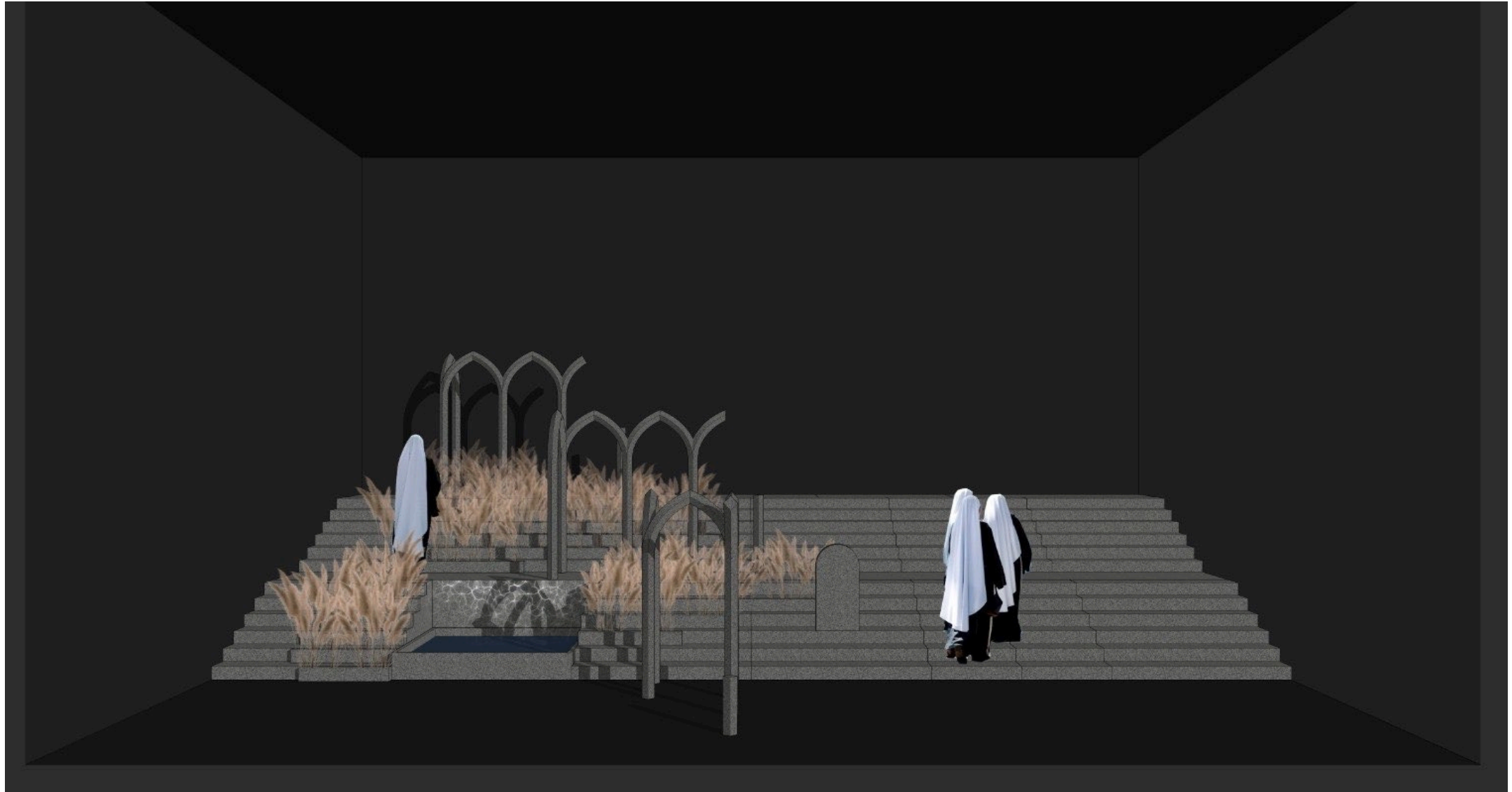
















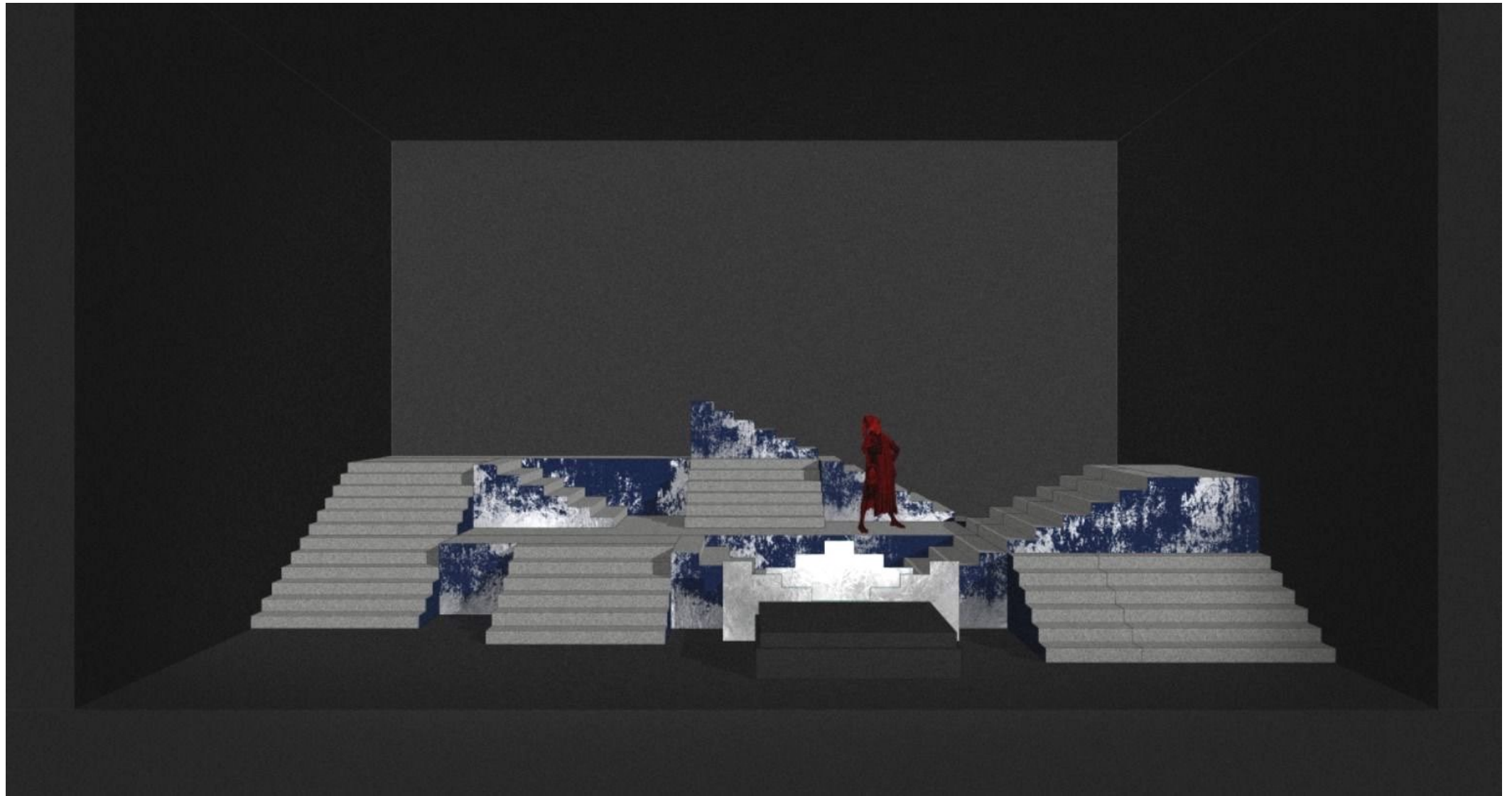






















[ph. Paul Camilleri]



**madama
butterfly (2023)**

Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

Production by Socjetà Filarmonika Leone / Teatru Aurora, Gozo, Ottobre 2023, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by M^o Colin Attard.

Stage direction Riccardo Buscarini, set/costume design Luke Azzopardi, lighting design Moritz Zavan Stoeckle

full video

On Merging Polarities

A few notes on Madama Butterfly
by Riccardo Buscarini - director

*Dicon ch'oltre mare
se cade in man dell'uom,
ogni farfalla da uno spillo è trafitta
ed in tavola infitta!*

—
*They say that overseas
if it should fall into the hands of man
a butterfly is stuck through with a pin
and fixed to a board!*

(Cio Cio San, Act I)

In a handful of words, in one of the most powerful pages of Giacomo Puccini's music, Cio Cio San and Pinkerton love duet, the young Butterfly reveals her fears and doubts. She has just got married to an American man after rejecting her traditions and her people. She has put everything at risk. She has abandoned her roots and threw herself in the unknown to end up stuck in a spider web she herself has created.

Who is *Madama Butterfly*? Having suffered poverty and having survived as a sex worker after her father's death, Cio Cio San perhaps is not as naive and reckless as she wants us to believe: she is also incredibly determined in trying to change what has not been an easy life. She proves to stand for her decisions, despite her family's denial, the cultural clash between her and her husband, the time she has to wait for him and despite his ultimate betrayal... until it is too much. When any hope is lost, as a classic tragedy hero, she has to kill herself to honour her mother culture and re-establish what is the natural order of things.

In Cio Cio San's character we witness the concrete transformation from a girl to a woman through motherhood and, at the same time, the destiny of the butterfly: the fragile dream of a new identity and the desire to escape, which are typical teenager traits.

Society/individual choice, belonging/denial, escaping/transforming, love/desire... I see *Madama Butterfly* as an opera of unmatched polarities which mirror relevant themes in the contemporary world. This new production stems from the natural principles of blooming, evolving and decaying and the inevitable frictions these processes involve.

Insects, animals, flowers and trees fill the fairytale-like Japanese imagery of the opera, making it a real Liberty masterpiece. Inspired by the exotic, floral iconography depicted by the composer and librettist, Luke Azzopardi and I imagined to place this tragedy on a majestic set representing two islands facing each other on a shiny ocean. Characters confront one another emerging from and blending in the background through costumes made of organza. Transparency in this staging is not only an aesthetic choice but also an ambiguous, metaphorical tool for mystery, mimesis, potential sameness and transformation - the butterfly protective chrysalis... and the deathly trap she is gradually sinking in.

Working on this opera for the second time made me realise once more the importance of the classics in their ability of talking about our existence.

Once again, I want to thank all the Staff of Società Filarmonica Leone for their interest in my work and for giving me the opportunity to put it into practice on this sublime piece of art.









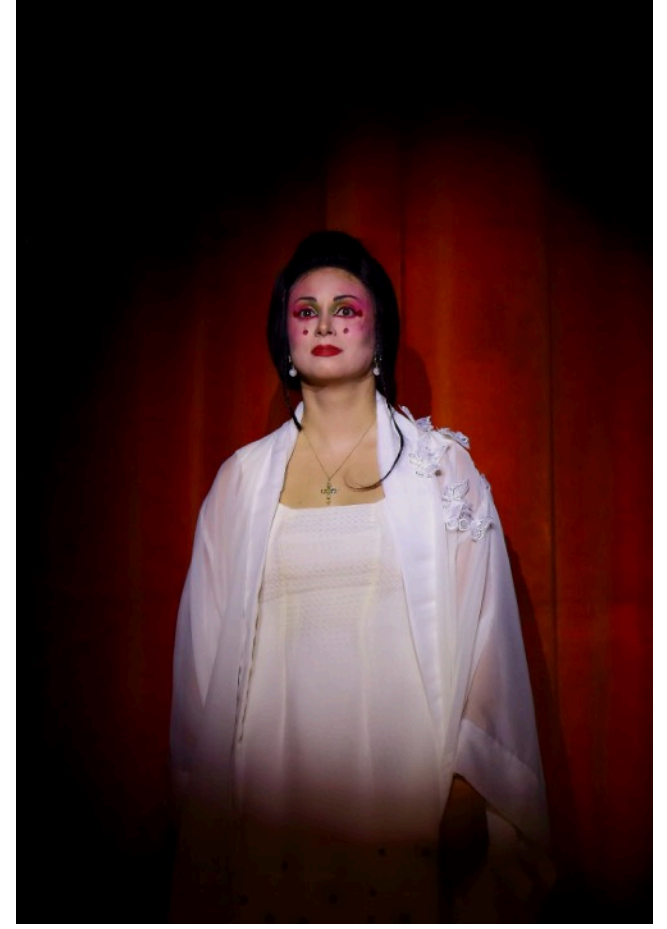














[ph. Francesca Ferrari]



goldberg variations

A dance, music and projection performance in collaboration with violinist Gian Maria Lodigiani (Orchestra Mozart) and video maker Martino Chiti on the theme of dreams on J.S. Bach *Goldberg Variations* - string trio version.

Winner of Bando ERT under 40. Produced by Concorso Film Festival. Presented at VERDI OFF 2020.

teaser
video integrale

[ph. Matteo Zangrandi]



dialoghi dalla boutique

A multimedia concert including contemporary devised by Riccardo Buscarini in collaboration with contemporary music ensemble Collettivo_21 and composer Alessandro Baldessari. *Dialoghi dalla Boutique* is a tribute to the dark and unsettling atmospheres of Dino Buzzati's short stories contained in the collection *La Boutique del Mistero* (1968).

Music by Thomas Adès, Alessandro Baldessari, Christophe Bertrand, Robert Muczynski, Jean-Claude Risset, Frederic Rzewski, Toru Takemitsu.

Premiered at Teatro Municipale (Piacenza/IT) on 24th November 2018 as part of Festival Incontemporanea.

**teaser
video integrale**



madama butterfly

From naive girl, to sensual lover, to betrayed wife, to desperate mother... Cio-Cio San transforms through the whole spectrum of femininity, just like a butterfly. The character finds evolution and death as the only way to escape from a cage she has built around herself after rejecting her own culture, family and religion. Just like in a Greek tragedy, order can be re-established only through the hero's suicide.

A minimalist, linear set with a Japanese house and a white bonsai garden framed by the gigantic architecture of Palazzo Farnese's armoury square, is where Puccini's tragedy takes place. The production is embellished by original 19th-century imperial kimonos belonging to costume designer Artemio Cabassi's private collection.

photo



the cry of the double bass

Composed by Sebastiano Dessanay, *The Cry of The Double Bass* is a contemporary chamber opera presented at Tête à Tête opera festival 2017 in London. Writer and theatre director Mike Carter worked on its libretto while M° Daniel Rosina conducted the premiere performance while Riccardo Buscarini directed its staging. *The Cry of the Double Bass* tells the story of an unnamed artist, charting his journey from childhood to being an accomplished musician. The work explores his changing relationship to music and the double bass, as he battles to fulfil his soul's desire. Richly symbolic and told as a mythic 'folk tale', it blends comedy and pathos.

Music and musical experience, creativity, the artist's inner and spiritual search, and the way society perceives musicians are the crucial themes of this opera.

composer website



Award-winning choreographer Riccardo Buscarini graduated from the London Contemporary Dance School in 2009. He won The Place Prize 2013 with *Athletes* and took part in the projects ArtsCross London 2013 (UK, Taiwan, China), Performing Gender 2013-15 (Italy, Croatia, Spain, Netherlands) and MAM-Maroc Artist Meeting (Marrakech). In the field of visual arts, he collaborated with Summerhall (Edinburgh), London Festival of Architecture 2016-2019, Nahmad Projects (London and miart 2017) and UNA Galleria (Spazio Leonardo, Milan).

Silk, his creation for the Chelyabinsk Contemporary Dance Theater (Russia) received two nominations (Best Choreography and Best Choreographer) for the Golden Mask 2018 at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, and was then restaged on ZfinMalta, the National Dance Company of Malta, in autumn 2019. In 2019 he also signed two new creations, *Nocturne* on Chelyabinsk Contemporary Dance Theater and *Suite Escape* on Equilibrio Dinamico Dance Company (Bari). In 2020 he created *Charade* for EDGE, The Place, London and was commissioned to create *Danse Sacrée et Danse Profane* for the 45th Cantiere Internazionale D'Arte di Montepulciano, Italy. In 2022 he signed *Requiem for Juliet*, his version of W.Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* commissioned by ZfinMalta. In 2023 he founded De Arte Saltandi / dAS FESTIVAL in Piacenza. In 2025 he has created short works for the students of Accademia Nazionale di Danza, MP3 Project (Rome) and Opus Ballet School (Florence).

At a very young age, between 18 and 21 he worked as a mime and dancer travelling internationally with important opera productions by F. Zeffirelli, B. De Tomasi, M.E. Mexia, D. Abbado. From 2016 to 2019 he worked alongside Giuseppina Campolonghi in the direction of *Don Pasquale* (Donizetti), *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini), *Madama Butterfly* and *Rigoletto* for Amici della Lirica Piacenza. As an assistant he worked alongside Italo Nunziata (*La forza del destino*, 2019), Leonardo Lidi (*Falstaff*, 2020) and Leo Nucci (*Madama Butterfly*, 2024) for the Fondazione Teatri Piacenza where in 2021 he signed the choreography of *Convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* by G. Donizetti directed by Renato Bonajuto. He directed his first opera, *Madama Butterfly* by G. Puccini at the Teatru Aurora in Gozo, where he returned in 2024 for the national premiere of Puccini's *Trittico* and in 2025 for G. Verdi's *La forza del destino*.

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