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POLAND

# Antonio Caldara: *Venceslao, re di Polonia*

17 November (Sunday) — 7.30 pm

Warsaw Philharmonic  
Concert Hall  
5 Jasna Street

The premiere of the opera *Venceslao* by Antonio Caldara (libretto: Apostolo Zeno) was held on 4 November 1725 at the court theatre in Vienna to celebrate the name day of Emperor Charles VI. The work was performed by a wonderful orchestra and excellent singers, including contralto Gaetano Orsini, mezzo-soprano Faustina Bordoni and tenor Francesco Borosini. The title character is the king of Poland and father of two sons. When the elder brother turns out to be a fratricide, the ruler is faced with a dramatic choice – to punish the criminal or to spare his life, to act like a king or like a father? *Venceslao* is an interesting opera, presenting the dilemma of power torn between the law of nature and the *raison d'État* with an obligatory love story in the background.

## Concert programme

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Antonio Caldara  
(1671–1736)  
*Venceslao, re di Polonia*  
opera in five acts,  
concert version  
libretto: Apostolo Zeno  
(1725)

### Performers:

**Max Emanuel Cenčić**  
Venceslao

**Nicholas Tamagna**  
Casimiro

**Dennis Orellana**  
Alessandro

**Sophie Junker**  
Lucinda

**Sonja Runje**  
Erenice

**Stefan Sbonnik**  
Ernando

**Tomáš Král**  
Gismondo

**{oh!} Orkiestra**

**Martyna Pastuszka**  
artistic director, violin

## Antonio Caldara: *Venceslao, re di Polonia*

### *Venceslao*. The dilemma of power torn between the law of nature and the *raison d'État*

The premiere of *Venceslao* by Antonio Caldara to the libretto by Apostolo Zeno was held on 4 November 1725 at the court theatre in Vienna to celebrate the name day of Emperor Charles VI. What gave the composer the idea to stage in Vienna



Antonio Caldara

fig. author unknown

an opera whose plot evoked the figure of a Polish ruler and that was set in Cracow? Historical topics – other than those related to antiquity – were used to diversify the operatic libretti created at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by *Tolomeo e Alessandro* (libretto: Carlo Sigismondo Capece) or *Il vincitor generoso* (libretto: Francesco Briani), to which the opera *Gismondo, re di Polonia* was composed. However, in the case of *Venceslao*, the reason

was prosaic, forced by a necessity of life. For a long time, Zeno, the imperial poet in Vienna, had been struggling with health problems. In one of his letters, he complained that he did not have the strength to complete the libretto of *Caio Mario in Minturno*, which was to mark the annual celebrations of the emperor's name day. Consequently, the poet returned to reviewing his earlier texts. At that time, he chose the libretto to *Venceslao*, which premiered in 1703 at the Venetian Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo, with music by Carlo Francesco Pollarolo, and had enjoyed unflagging popularity among the audience and composers ever since. The libretto, modified for the needs of various cultural centres, was also known under other titles, such as *Il fratricida innocente* [*The Innocent Fratricide*] or *La Lucinda fedele* [*Faithful Lucinda*]. In 1722, an opera entitled *Venceslao* was dedicated in Venice to Polish magnate Teodor Konstanty Lubomirski; three years later, he staged it in Cracow at his private theatre. I suppose that the decision of the poet may have been additionally influenced by the recent marriage of Louis XV to a Pole, Maria Leszczyńska (4 September 1725). It was not the last staging of this title on the territory of the Republic of Poland.

When writing the libretto, Zeno was inspired by earlier works, thus confirming the overlapping of various theatrical traditions in the then Europe. The first source of inspiration was the play *Venceslas* (1647–48) by Jean Rotrou (1609–1650), based on the then-recent Spanish play *No hay ser padre siendo rey* (1640) by Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla. This work also inspired Carlo Celano to write a five-act comedy *Non è padre essendo re*, staged in 1663 in Naples, which Zeno most likely knew. However, the poet himself pointed primarily to historical texts as the source of inspiration, including the treatise *Fragmina de moribus Tartarorum, Litanorum et Moschorum* by Michalo Litanus (1490–1560), from which he took information about

Lithuania and the figure of Queen Lucinda, the multi-volume series *Historiarum sui temporis* by Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553–1617), in which the country was called a grand duchy, as well as the compendium *Florus polonicus* by Joachim Pastorius (1611–1681), from which he could learn that in the early history of Poland, the crown was hereditary. However, among the researchers of Zeno's oeuvre, there is no certainty as to which particular ruler named Władysław the poet had in mind when writing the *Venceslao* libretto. Below, I present a brief outline of the plot.

The title king has two sons: impetuous, libertine, but brave Kazimierz (Casimiro) and Aleksander (Alessandro) – charming, of a balanced disposition. Both brothers are in love with the same woman, Erenice. Meanwhile, she only has eyes for Aleksander. Fearing the violent reaction of his older brother, Aleksander asks Ernando, a royal general and at the same time his friend, to pretend to love Erenice. Ernando is so successful in focusing all the jealousy and anger of Kazimierz on himself that when the prince learns that the general intends to secretly marry Erenice, he decides to kill him. And so he does, except that the murdered rival turns out to be not Ernando, but Aleksander. Before this terrible crime takes place, the plot gets complicated by the appearance of Lucinda, the queen of Lithuania and Kazimierz's former love, whom he promised in writing that he would marry. The prince pretends not to recognise his former beloved. Nevertheless, she still wants to enforce his promise of marriage. When Władysław learns who the guest *in travesti* really is, he promises Lucinda that he will correct the wrong that was done to her by his son. Soon after, Kazimierz kills his brother. The answer to the question of how the title character is to act in this dramatic situation is the most important theme of Zeno's libretto. Władysław is forced to choose between two orders – the laws of nature and the *raison d'État*. The situation is even more complicated, because, as Italian musicologist Silvia Urbani rightly observed, the monarch faces a quadruple dilemma: '1) judicial – he must judge the murderer and do justice to Aleksander; 2) moral – he must keep the promise made to Lucinda; 3) human – he must endure the pain of a father condemning his son, although this son is a fratricide; 4) political – he must fulfil the will of people who ask for forgiveness for Kazimierz.'<sup>1</sup> Before we get to know the king's decision, a few words are still due to the composer of the opera, whose music is rarely performed in Poland.

Before Antonio Caldara took over the coveted position of *Vize-Kapellmeister* to the Imperial Court in Vienna, he had already been an extremely respected creator of operas, oratorios, cantatas, as well as religious and instrumental music in Italy. Born around 1671 to a musical family in Venice, he launched his career in his hometown as a cello virtuoso

<sup>1</sup> Silvia Urbani, *Il "Venceslao" di Zeno e Caldara (1725): invenzione del dramma, tradizione del testo, libretto e partitura*, Università di Bologna, 2017, p. 20.

and singer in the Basilica of San Marco and then as a composer of vocal and instrumental music.

In 1699, he received the prestigious position of *maestro di cappella* at the court of Ferdinand Charles in Mantua. However, the regular work at the Gonzaga court was interrupted by the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701). In search of a new job, Caldara went to Rome in 1708 and until 1716, he served as *maestro di cappella* at the court of Prince Maria Francesco Ruspoli – one of the greatest patrons of music of that period, sponsor of, among others, George Frideric Handel. For the new patron, Caldara wrote over one hundred and fifty cantatas for one or two voices (accompanied by a string ensemble or only by *basso continuo*), a cycle of a few palace oratorios performed during Easter and several operas. At that time, his music could be heard in Rome along with works by Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Giovanni Bononcini, Francesco Gasparini, Giovanni Lulier, Filippo Amadei and many others. One of the people listening to Caldara's compositions in the Eternal City was also Polish dowager queen Maria Kazimiera Sobieska.

In 1708, an event occurred that largely influenced the later fate of the composer. Caldara went to Barcelona, where his composition *Il più bel nome* (libretto: Pietro Pariati) graced the wedding of Charles III of Habsburg and Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Soon, Charles – after the unexpected death of his brother, Joseph I (1711) – became the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (as Charles VI) and the future patron of the composer. Until that time, however, Caldara would consistently send his works to Vienna. It must be admitted that those actions proved effective. In mid-May 1716, together with his wife, the singer Caterina Petrolli, the artist went to Vienna, where, at the beginning of the following year, he took the position of *Vize-Kapellmeister*; in fact, he became the main composer to the Imperial Court. His extremely abundant oeuvre from this period includes operas gracing the name day and birthday of the ruler or his wife (each year), one of the carnival operas, incidental music related to court events, oratorios, religious music and canons. Caldara was able to meet many of his responsibilities thanks to his extremely fast work pace. For example, we know that he wrote the five-act opera *Enone* (1729) in just ten days, and this was not unusual for him. What is more, the composer did not resort to using his earlier music or material by other composers, which also makes him a unique artist among eighteenth-century composers. His works were appreciated by contemporary musicians; for many, they were a model in terms of counterpoint. While Caldara's operatic oeuvre quickly fell into oblivion due to a change in musical style, his religious pieces were performed throughout the entire eighteenth century. Johann Mattheson – a respected German theoretician, singer and composer, a friend of Handel – counted Caldara

among the lucky artists who were characterised by 'a great knowledge of human affects and emotions'.<sup>2</sup>

In Vienna, Caldara had at his disposal excellent vocalists and a wonderful orchestra, one of the best in Europe. The libretto published by Johann van Gehlen does not contain the names of the singers, but at least some of them can be guessed on the basis of Caldara's score stored in the Austrian National Library in Vienna and a copy preserved in the Meiningen collection of Anton Ulrich Herzog von Sachsen-Coburg-Meiningen. The character of **Venceslao** was played by Gaetano Orsini, a famous contralto castrato, and **Casimir** – by Pietro Casati, also a contralto. In the case of **Alessandro**, we are not certain, but it was either Giovanni Vincenzi or Domenico Genovesi, soprano. **Lucinda** was sung by La Faustina, that is the famous mezzo-soprano Faustina Bordoni, highly respected by Zeno himself. The figure of **Erenice** was performed by Anna Ambreville, contralto. **Ernando** was portrayed by Francesco Borosini, an outstanding tenor, and **Gismondo** – by Christoph Praun, bass. The Viennese *Venceslao* was therefore presented by an excellent cast while offering sonoristic diversity, as it is worth recalling that in other Italian cities, but also abroad, the cast was dominated by high voices, both female and male.

Caldara showed that he thoroughly interpreted the libretto, requiring a strictly established form at that time, that is a succession of *da capo* arias and recitatives, with a small share of ensembles. This observation is perfectly demonstrated by the arias: depending on the dramaturgical situation and emotions experienced by the characters, they are preceded by extensive introductory *ritornelli* performed by the entire orchestra or only by string instruments. Sometimes, they are completely deprived of such an introduction, since a given character's quick reaction seemed more appropriate. It is not uncommon to observe changes in instrumentation or contrasting tempi within one aria. The arias are also characterised by an elegant phrase, Baroque counterpoint in instrumental parts, rhythmic diversity, as well as dialogues between instruments and between the orchestra and singers. The vocal parts require acting skills, virtuosity and a palette of different emotions, but coloraturas – one of the most important elements of vocal proficiency – usually do not exceed three bars. As far as we know, Charles VI – a lover of late Baroque music, distrustful of the popular gallant style – did not want to be surprised by vocal acrobatics. By contrast, he wanted to be moved, and for twenty years, the composer of *Venceslao* managed to satisfy the taste of this demanding and perfectly musically educated patron. Now, we too have the chance to immerse ourselves in the world of musical imagination of Antonio Caldara, one of the most important masters of opera of his time.

Aneta Markuszewska

<sup>2</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Das forschende Orchestre*, as quoted in: Ursula Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara. Life and Venetian-Roman Oratorios*, Firenze 2007, p. 123.

## Max Emanuel Cenčić – countertenor



☐ Lukasz Rajchert

The countertenor, director, impresario, agency owner and artistic director Max Emanuel Cenčić is committed to the rediscovery

and performance of eighteenth-century music. He has been performing on stage for more than forty years, appearing at major opera houses worldwide, such as the Vienna State Opera, the Theater an der Wien, the Zurich Opera House, the Opéra Royal in Versailles, the Bavarian State Opera, the Staatsoper Unter den Linden Berlin, Barcelona's Gran Teatro

del Liceu, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, La Scala in Milan and the Brussels opera house La Monnaie. Starting his vocal training as a boy singer in Vienna, he began his solo career as a soprano in 1992, which he continued as a countertenor from 2001. As director of Parnassus Arts Productions, he is responsible for the conception, direction and performance of important works of Italian Baroque music. For his artistic work, he was honoured by the French Ministry of Culture as *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* and received the Honorary Award of the German Record Critics' Association in the 'Classical' category in 2021 for his life's work.

Max Emanuel Cenčić is now also making a name for himself internationally as a director and staged productions at the 2019 Salzburg Festival and at the Badisches Staatstheater as part of the International Handel Festival, among others. Since 2020, Max Emanuel Cenčić has been the artistic director of the Bayreuth Baroque Opera Festival, which was voted the best festival of 2024 by the Oper! Awards. His most recent roles include Lotario at La Scala in Milan, Guido in Vienna and Bayreuth and Tolomeo in Paris, Cologne, Luxembourg, the Monte Carlo Opera, Versailles and at the Vienna State Opera.

## Nicholas Tamagna – countertenor



☐ Dario Acosta

Nicholas Tamagna has risen meteorically in recent years and is now one of the world's most fascinating alto singers.

Highlights of the recent seasons have undoubtedly included the participation as Ermanno in the multi-award winning CD recording *Gismondo, re di Polonia* (opera by Vinci) on the Parnassus label and extensive concert touring, his Met debut in March 2020 as Narciso in Handel's *Agrippina*, his Bayreuth Baroque debut as Timagene in Vinci's *Alessandro nell'Indie* and his spectacular interpretations of the Handel roles: Ruggiero

in *Alcina* at the Halle Handel Festival and Tolomeo in *Giulio Cesare* at the Göttingen Handel Festival and at the Netherlands Reisopera. Nicholas Tamagna's engagements have taken him to other major opera houses, concert halls and festivals around the world, including Carnegie Hall, the Opéra Royal de Versailles, the Opéra de Vichy, the Potsdam Music Festival, the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, the Musiktheater an der Wien, the US Spoleto Festival and Opera Omaha. There, he has performed with the Melbourne Consort, Malandain Ballet Biarritz, Operamission, One World Symphony, Opera Omnia and many others. As part of the early-music ensemble, Le Poème Harmonique, he has toured France several times with different operas.

In recent years, he has sung Pane in Cavalli's *La Calisto*, Farnace in Mozart's *Mitridate*, Prince Orlofsky in Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* and the title role in Gluck's *Orpheus* and in Hasse's *Siroe*, among others. Nicholas Tamagna can be seen on DVD recordings in the title role of Glass' *Akhmaten* (Orange Mountain Music), the Spirit in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Outhère Music) and with the Canadian early-music ensemble ¡Sacabuche! in performances of unpublished works of the Italian Baroque (ATMA Classique). He was the first-prize winner of the inaugural Nico Castel International Master Singer Competition. In 2011, he won the second Jury Prize of the Arkadi Foundation Opera Competition.

## Denis Orellana – soprano



☐ Sergio Rodriguez

The young and talented soprano Dennis Orellana was born in 2000 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. He began his music studies in the San Pedro

Sula Youth Symphonic Orchestra as a trombonist with Alfonso Flores. He combined his singing training with his university studies in computer science and digital design. In early 2021, he made his debut in Madrid with the role of Amor in the premiere of *La selva sin amor* and Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*. He made his professional

and international debut as Berardo in Porpora's *Carlo il Calvo* in August 2021 at the Teatro Auditorio San Lorenzo del Escorial. He shared the stage with the likes of Max Emanuel Cenčić, Julia Lezhneva, Franco Fagioli and Markellos Chryssicos conducted Armonia Atenea. In February 2022, he sang Moth in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Wilhelma Theater in Stuttgart. Dennis Orellana has taken part in several productions from the 2022/23 season on. He appeared as Zeffiro in Albinoni's *Il nascimento dell'Aurora* and as Ernesto in Bononcini's *Griselda* at the Bayreuth Baroque Opera Festival, as Ernesto in *Griselda* in Wrocław, Berardo in *Carlo il Calvo* in Dortmund and at Scala

di Milano (house debut), Ramiro (*La finta giardiniera*) at Salzburger Landestheater and Alessandro in Caldara's *Venceslao* in Gliwice and at the Theater an der Wien (house debut). During the season 2023/24, Dennis Orellana sang roles like Sifare (*Mitridate, re di Ponto*) at the opera houses in Brussels, Moms and Namur, the title role of Teseo at the Handel Festival Halle and in Wrocław, Darius (*Nebucadnezar*) at the Schlosstheater Schwetzingen and Theater Magdeburg and Hunapuh (*The Indian Queen*) with Salzburger Festspiele. He regularly works with conductors like Teodor Currentzis, George Petrou, Gabriel Venzago, Benjamin Bayl, Dorothee Oberlinger and Martyna Pastuszka.

## Sophie Junker – soprano



☐ Jean-Baptiste Millot

Sophie Junker regularly performs with top-flight conductors, including Harry Bicket, Laurence Cummings, Christian Curnyn, Masaaki Suzuki

and Stefano Montanari. Described by the *Opera* magazine as 'irresistibly charming', Sophie Junker already has an established relationship with the Opera Royal de Liège Wallonie and the Angers-Nantes Opéra. She made her American operatic début in 2016, singing Cleis in Martini's *Sapho* and Hélène in Chabrier's *Une Éducation Manquée*. Further operatic roles include Caio in Vivaldi's *Ottone in Villa* at the Copenhagen

Opera Festival and Proserpine/Euridice in Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux enfers* (Wigmore Hall, The Hague). In concert, Sophie Junker appears regularly as soloist with Concerto Copenhagen conducted by Lars Ulrik Mortensen, David Bates' La Nuova Musica, the Belgium-based ensemble Vox Luminis, Le Concert de la Loge conducted by Julien Chauvin, Le Poème Harmonique conducted by Vincent Dumestre and Jonathan Cohen's Arcangelo. She performed Bach's *St John Passion* with Ensemble 1704, Lully's *Grands Motets* and toured *Vespro a san Marco* alongside the Chœur de Chambre de Namur conducted by Leonardo García Alarcón. Further performances included Mozart's *Grande Messe in C minor* with B'Rock and Handel's

*Apollo e Dafne* with {oh!} Orkiestra conducted by Martyna Pastuszka. The soprano's discography includes *Sacrifices* with La Nuova Musica (Harmonia Mundi), Handel's *Esther* with Laurence Cummings (Accent), Grétry's *L'Épreuve Villageoise* (Naxos), Bach's *Secular Cantatas* with the Bach Collegium Japan under Masaaki Suzuki (BIS), *Stravaganza d'amore* with Pygmalion under Raphaël Pichon (Harmonia Mundi) and Cunegunda in Leonardo Vinci's *Gismondo* (Parnassus Arts Productions). In 2020, Sophie Junker's first solo album, *La Francesina*, was released under the label Aparté. This publication won the International Classical Music Award as well as the Trophée Forum-Opéra.

## Sonja Runje – contralto



☐ Mario Poje

*Stagione*, the magazine of the Musiktheater an der Wien, describes Sonja Runje in its issue 4/23 as one of the most beautiful Baroque voices

of our days. The young contralto has already sung such roles as the title parts in Handel's *Amadigi*, *Giulio Cesare* and Bononcini's *Griselda*, furthermore Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo*, Disinganno in Handel's *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, Calipso in Porpora's *Polifemo*, Bradamante and Alcina in Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso*, Acheloo in Steffani's *La lotta d'Ercole*

con *Acheloo*, Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Erenice in Caldara's *Venceslao*, Isabella in Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri*, Sesto in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Mércèdes in Bizet's *Carmen* and Maddalena in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Sonja Runje is a sought-after oratorio and concert singer. Previous performances include Bach's Mass in B minor, *Christmas Oratory*, *St Matthew Passion* and cantatas (BWV 54, 11, 151), Handel's *Messiah*, *Dixit Dominus* and *Il dolce tempo*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Stabat Mater*, Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, J.C. Bach's *Ach, dass ich Wassers gnug hätte*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Missa Brevis in B*, Mendelssohn-Bartoldy's *A Midsummer Night's*

*Dream* and *Elijah*, Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, Saint-Saëns' *Oratorio de Noël*, Mahler's Symphony No. 2, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Schubert's *Winterreise* and Brouwer's *Canciones Amatorias*. Sonja Runje graduated with honors from the Academy of Music at the University of Zagreb with a master's degree in opera singing under Martina Gojčeta Silić. She is currently working regularly with Eva Blahova in Bratislava. Highlights of Sonja Runje's 2024/25 season are the title role in *Giulio Cesare* at the Cologne Opera, Farnace (*Mitridate, re di Ponto*) at the Opera de Lausanne and the role of Bradamante in Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso* with the Bayreuth Baroque Opera Festival.

## Stefan Sbonnik – tenor



☐ George Oikonomidis

Stefan Sbonnik is a versatile German tenor who is equally successful in concert, Baroque repertoire and opera. In the 2021/22 season,

he made his debut as Tamino in a new production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the Landestheater Niederbayern and in the tenor role in a staged production of Bach's *St John Passion* at the Theater Münster. He will continue to sing both core roles in the future and is preparing his role debuts

as Don Ottavio (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*) and Ferrando (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*). Stefan Sbonnik has sung a dozen roles on stage, including the title role in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Kalil in Christian Jost's *Die arabische Nacht*, Remendado in Bizet's *Carmen* and Bill in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* at the Prinzregententheater in Munich and in Ingolstadt. In concert, he sang tenor solos in Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* at the Oetkerhalle in Bielefeld, Saint-Saëns's *Christmas Oratorio* in Salzburg, Britten's *War Requiem* in Exeter and Mozart's version of Handel's *Messiah* at the Kassler Musiktage, among others. Recent engagements include the role

of Asprando in Porpora's *Carlo il Calvo* for his La Scala di Milano debut, the title role in Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto* at the opera houses in Brussels, Namur and Mombach and *St John Passion* in Münster, the Milan Cathedral and Cologne. Stefan Sbonnik often performs the concert and oratorio repertoire with Handel's *Messiah* (October 2022 in Melle), Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (December 2022 in Erwitte), Mass in B minor (April 2023 in Aachen), Haydn's *Stabat Mater* (March 2023 in Dillenburg), *The Seasons* (September 2023 in Langnau) and *The Creation* (September 2023 in Georgsmarienhütte).

## Tomas Kral – baritone



□ Barbara Dziel

Since 2005, the baritone Tomas Kral has appeared with many of the best-known European ensembles, including Collegium Vocale

Gent, La Venexiana, Vox Luminis, Holland Baroque, B'Rock Orchestra, Wrocław Baroque Orchestra, Collegium 1704, Collegium Marianum and Musica Florea. He has performed at the Prague Spring Festival, the Dresdner and Salzburger Festspiele, the festivals of La Chaise-Dieu, Ambronay and Sablé and the Early Music Festivals in Bruges and Utrecht,

while other venues have included the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Wigmore Hall and BOZAR in Brussels.

Tomas Kral's wide-ranging opera roles include Guglielmo (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*), Ottokar (Weber's *Der Freischütz*), Uberto (Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*), Giove (Cavalli's *La Calisto*), Ernesto (Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*), Apollo (Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Handel's *Apollo e Dafne*) and the title role in Suppé's *Boccaccio*. He notably took part in the extraordinary staging of Bach's *St John Passion* directed by Pierre Audi for the Dutch National Opera and of Mozart's *Requiem* at the Kunstfestspiele Herrenhausen and Theater Giessen, where he also took the title role in a rare

production of Telemann's version of Handel's *Riccardo Primo*. The baritone's last seasons were defined by Baroque opera roles like Erode in Stradella's *San Giovanni Battista* and Pimpinone in Albinoni's *Vesperta e Pimpinone*. Tomas Kral's many recordings include such rarities as *Missa votiva* and *Lamentationes Jeremiae Profetae* by the great Bohemian master Jan Dismas Zelenka, a CD of masterpieces by the early Baroque Polish composer Marcin Mielczewski, Bach's Mass in B minor with Collegium 1704 and Leoš Janáček's *Moravian Folk Songs*. In 2022, Tomas Kral released *Kings in the North*, his first solo album (Aparté) recorded with the Wrocław Baroque Orchestra conducted by Jarosław Thiel.

## Martyna Pastuszka – artistic director, violin



□ Magdalena Hajas

Violinist, concertmaster, musical entrepreneur.

Over the years, performing throughout Europe as a soloist, concertmaster,

chamber musician and orchestra leader, Martyna Pastuszka has become one of the most unconventional musicians of her generation. Since 2022, as a concertmaster, she has been cooperating with Ensemble Pygmalion (conducted by Raphaël Pichon) and since 2023 – with the Utopia Orchestra (conducted by Teodor Currentzis). In addition, she appears in the same

role in such ensembles as Le Concert de la Loge and Capella Cracoviensis. As a soloist, she cooperates with Concerto Copenhagen, Le Parlement de Musique and the AUKSO Chamber Orchestra. As an artistic leader and conductor, Martyna Pastuszka has been invited to lead many ensembles, including the Klaipeda Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia Iuventus and the Orchestra of the Polish Chamber Opera. In 2012, Martyna Pastuszka founded the ensemble {oh!} Orkiestra, specialising in historically informed performance, with which she regularly performs at renowned festivals and in the greatest concert halls. An important aspect of the above ensemble's activity is an operatic

and oratorio repertoire. As the ensemble's artistic director, Martyna has contributed to the revival of numerous forgotten works of the Baroque era. Many of them appeared on stage for the first time in hundreds of years. In 2023, Martyna Pastuszka received the prestigious Coryphaeus of Polish Music Award in the Personality of the Year category. So far, she has participated in an impressive number of over sixty CD recordings. Her recent albums have been nominated for many important awards, including Fryderyk, the International Classical Music Award and Polityka's Passport in the Personality of the Year category. In 2021, she was nominated for the OPUS Klassik Award in the Conductor of the Year category.

## {oh!} Orkiestra

The orchestra was founded in 2012. Already in the first decade of its existence, this constantly growing ensemble led by Martyna Pastuszka earned the title of the best orchestra specialising in historically informed performance in Poland and one of the most interesting orchestras – musically speaking – on the European scene. {oh!} Orkiestra currently cooperates with the most important cultural institutions in Poland, such as the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, as well as with the following festivals: Misteria Paschalia, All'Improviso, Chopin and His Europe, Actus Humanus.

The ensemble enjoys international recognition, as evidenced by concerts in the most important venues, including Wigmore Hall, Theater an der Wien, Auditorium de l'Opéra de Dijon, Markgräfliches Opernhaus in Bayreuth, Konzerthaus Dortmund, Kölner Philharmonie and at renowned festivals in Europe, such as the Bayreuth Baroque Opera Festival, Bachfest Leipzig, Händel-Festspiele in Halle, Tage Alter Musik Regensburg, Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci, Tage Alter Musik in Herne or the Stockholm Early Music Festival. {oh!} Orkiestra has released eleven CD albums and has been broadcast on most European radio stations,

as well as on Mezzo, Medici.tv, Arte TV and Polish Radio PR2. In 2021, TVP Kultura made a documentary about Martyna Pastuszka and {oh!} Orkiestra entitled *Nie jestem maestro [I Am Not a Maestro]*. Together with the All'Improviso Improvised Early Music Festival in Gliwice and the Vienna-based agency Parnassus Arts Productions, {oh!} Orkiestra constantly rediscovers forgotten Baroque operatic repertoire. The orchestra has premiered stage versions of *Didone abbandonata* by Sarri, *Arminio* by Hasse and *Alessandro nell'Indie* by Vinci, as well as concert versions of *Gismondo, re di Polonia* by Vinci and *Venceslao* by Caldara.

