

Press release

Greek conductor George Petrou – Swedish debut at Royal Opera Stockholm with Handel’s „Xerxes“: 6. February 2015

Greek conductor George Petrou will be making his Swedish debut at the Royal Opera in Stockholm: On 6. February 2015 he will be conducting the revival of “Xerxes” by Georg Friedrich Handel. Katija Dragojevic will be heard in the titel role; other main characters will be represented by Susanna Stern (Romilda), Vivianne Holmberg (Atalante), Johanna Rudström (Arsamenes), Katarina Leoson (Amastris), John Erik Eleby (Ariodates) and Jens Persson (Elviro). The production was directed by Daniel Slater, stage design, costumes and mask by Robert Innes Hopkins. Further performances: 11., 14., 17., 24., 27. February and 3. March.

George Petrou has been established as one of the world's leading Handel specialists. Many of his Handel-opera-recordings received important classical music awards like the French Diapason d’Or and Choc du monde de la musique as well as the German ECHO Klassik. For George Petrou “Xerxes” in Stockholm is also a premiere even though he has already conducted selected arias of the opera in the past: “Serse was a turning point in Handel's operatic output. It looked ahead into the future, breaking a great deal of the Opera seria conventions. Apparently it quite shocked the public with its novelty of structure and style, and it wasn't understood. However, it remains one of Handel's top creations.” “Xerxes” is one of the most frequently played operas by Handel. The plot unfolds as a comic rollercoaster of love, jealousy and secret desires in which nothing is quite as it seems. It saw its premiere in April 1738 at the King’s Theatre in London.

In 2014, George Petrou and his Greek orchestra Armonia Atenea were involved in several highly praised CD-recordings for the label DECCA: In summer 2014 their DECCA orchestra-debut with Beethoven’s “Creatures of Prometheus” was of great importance. The CD swiftly became the ‘Album of the week’ of The Sunday Times and the ‘orchestral choice’ of the BBC Music Magazine. Straight after its international release in November 2014 the recording of Johann Adolph Hasse’s “Siroe” starring a world class cast such as Max Emanuel Cencic, Franco Fagioli and Julia Lezhneva received raving reviews worldwide and was immediately awarded the Diapason d’Or: “George Petrou conducted the orchestra Armonia Atenea by a master hand. At all times, he was attentively concerned about keeping the dialogue with the voices which produced dramatic emotions.” (Diapason Magazine)

In the season 2014/15 the busy conductor will continue to lead both ‘his’ orchestra as well as other orchestras. With Armonia Atenea he can be heard in Munich, Germany (1. March, with Max Emanuel Cencic and his Hasse-opera-arias-programme “Rokoko”), in Paris, France (Théâtre des Champs Elysées) with a Countertenor Gala (19. March), with Handel’s

“Alessandro” in Brussels, Belgium (21. March), Hasse's “Siroe” at the Budapest Festival (18. April) and Theater an der Wien, Austria (21. April). An opera engagement will take George Petrou to the Opéra de Nice, France. There he will be leading the Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice in the new production of Rossini's “Semiramide” that will premiere on 18. March (further performances on 20., 22. and 24. March).

George Petrou turned to conducting after following a successful career as a concert pianist. His activities encompass a very wide repertoire from Early Music to composers of the 19. century, with emphasis on historically informed interpretations and opera. In 2012 he became Artistic Director of the Athens based, award-winning Armonia Atenea. The internationally acclaimed orchestra is the flagship of the Greek orchestra scene. So far, his engagements of the 2014/15 season have taken George Petrou across Europe and Russia both with and without his orchestra: With Armonia Atenea he caused quite a stir in London at the BBC Proms, in Moscow with Handel's “Alessandro”, Bucharest, Istanbul and Versailles with Hasse's “Siroe” to name but a few. He conducted the renowned orchestra B'Rock f.e. in Amsterdam, Brussels, Bremen, the Slovenská filharmónia in Bratislava and the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra. Furthermore he recently received great acclaim with Mozart's “Mitridate” at the Mannheimer Mozartsommer.

Handel: “Xerxes“

6., 11., 14., 17., 24., 27. February and 3. March 2015 – Kungliga Operan Stockholm

Overview next engagements George Petrou (selection):

- 1. March 2015** – Munich, Hasse: “Rokoko“ (with Armonia Atenea and Max Emanuel Cencic)
- 18., 20., 22., 24. March 2015** – Nice, Opéra, Rossini: “Semiramide“,
- 19. March 2015** – Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Countertenor Gala (with Armonia Atenea)
- 21. March 2015** – Brussels, Bozar, Handel: “Alessandro“ (with Armonia Atenea)
- 8. April 2015** – Athens, Megaron, Haydn: Stabat Mater (with Armonia Atenea)
- 18. April 2015** – Budapest, Hasse: “Siroe“
- 21. April 2015** – Vienna, Theater an der Wien, Hasse: “Siroe“