

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION: A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

THE TIMELESSNESS OF LA CENERENTOLA

The basis for *La Cenerentola* is a tale by Charles Perrault in 1697. This tale has become a classic and tells a universal story - that of a girl who is mistreated by her own family and, thanks to a fairy's magic, can see her dream come true: being the love object of a prince who will take her out of her poverty and servitude and crown her as princess and queen.

We have wanted to take a new look at the tale's dramatic narration and to accentuate the concept of timelessness. This isn't something that happened purely in the past: it is still valid today and is not the legacy of a single culture but of all humanity. We all dream of escaping poverty and misery, of living full and happy lives, and it is better if love brings about or acts as a catalyst for this change. But this love arrives from the outside as if by magic, and it's from another social class: the highest.

That's why the story is set in an empty, clean space, and it's here where the transformations are experienced. In our interpretation everything is a dream, the space is constantly changing, and the transformation of each situation in the story is through light. Moreover, there is no specific architecture (not in a defined or temporal sense), but rather, there's room for everything. Our aim has been to preserve the basic concept of the original tale as well as respecting the opera version, where Rossini's music adds a real dimension to the feelings, sensations and emotions of the work.

This composer takes us along different paths: the comic path with characters and situations distorted from the "real" characters; the romantic path when there are love scenes between the couple, because this is a proper love with passion and desire, and it's eager to be revealed; and the clash of the characters' contradictory feelings and the conflictive narrative between the plot and the characters, creating different musical moments of great beauty and complexity. The characters are created under the gaze of a Mediterranean light with pure, highly exaggerated colors, a deformation that accentuates the personalities of each of the singers-actors and how they evolve within the tale.

A constant metamorphosis occurs in this apparently simple and empty space and one that follows the plot since, in our interpretation, it's all a story imagined by the main character in order to escape from her dramatic situation. We enter a world of dreams-reality-fiction imagination, combined in such a way that we're not sure where or when we are actually living. Spatial concepts appear within this empty world to bring the scenes to life, from the home of Don Magnifico to the palace, the gardens and the cellar, with the appearance of symbolic elements, essential for giving meaning to the dramatic evolution of the opera: the coaches, the tables laid with food, the throne, the costumes. And so, each of the settings, situations and actions of this voyage gradually transmute, going from the particular true reality of the beginning to another new reality, of which we have always dreamed, and which might be as real as the authentic reality.

Rossini is a great artist and a versatile composer with a playful sense of art, of creation as well as of the meaning of life. I am particularly interested in the concept of game in both his music, with a vibrant beauty and complexity; and his stories, which are tremendously contemporary and valid these days. Rossini never loses this ironic and absurd sense in his perspective; he places a mirror in front of the audience so that they can see their own reality in a distorted yet augmented way. He plays with our passions, doubts, hopes, feelings and we see ourselves reflected on stage in our own misery and aspirations; a reflection of the human behavior. Rossini is a modern artist who exudes aroma, colors, flavors, and Mediterranean sounds. I feel very much identified in this aspect of *homo ludens*, so well represented in his *opere buffe* that are splendid comedies that transport us to other worlds, other stadiums, sometimes through a fairy tale, sometimes an exotic journey, sometime an epic legend or a theater play.

Our staging aims to show the indefinite nature of a reality that clashes with fantasy and that perhaps, when all is said and done, was only a dream like life itself...because dreams are but dreams.

-Joan Font, production director, *La Cenerentola*



Joan Font



Photo by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.