

STAATSOPER STUTT GART

Press Release

Stuttgart, 21.12.2021

A struggle of liberation between the sexes

Antonio Vivaldi's oratorio *Juditha triumphans* celebrates its premiere at Staatsoper Stuttgart. The production is staged by Italian director Silvia Costa who leads an all-female cast.

After a delay of almost two years, Antonio Vivaldi's oratorio *Juditha triumphans* staged by **Silvia Costa** finally premieres at **Staatsoper Stuttgart** on **16 January, 2022** at 6 pm. Ensemble member **Rachael Wilson** makes her debut in the title role of the oratorio, which is scored exclusively for female voices. **Stine Marie Fischer** takes on the role of Holofernes and **Diana Haller** sings Vagaus. Italian Mezzo-Soprano **Gaia Petrone** makes her guest appearance as Abra and **Alexandra Urquiola** from the International Opera Studio Stuttgart sings Ozias. A central part in the score is given to a female chorus allowing the ladies of the Staatsoperchor Stuttgart an important and prominent role on stage. The musical direction is provided by Australian-Dutch conductor **Benjamin Bayl**. Originally scheduled in the 2019/20 season, the production had to be postponed due to the Corona pandemic just before its premiere.

Juditha triumphans devicta Holofernis barbarie (*Judith triumphant over Holofernes' barbarism*), which is the work's full title, represents Vivaldi's only surviving oratorio, and its all-female score alone has guaranteed a special place in music history. At its premiere in 1716 at the girls' orphanage of the Ospedale della Pietà, it was only young women who sang and played the music. The orphanage was famous for its musical excellency. The story of the radiantly beautiful Hebrew widow Judith, who seduces commander Holofernes and cuts off his head with his own sword, has long been a popular European myth of self-defense: Christianity against "barbarians," mediated through the topos of "woman against man". Seen as an icon of resistance, the world of visual arts and drama has brought forward many versions of Judith over the centuries and all of them tell of irreconcilable enmity.

Director Silvia Costa, who was influenced by Romeo Castellucci's artistic style, studied fine arts and theater in Venice. In recent years, the Italian director participated in productions at the Salzburg Festival and the F estival d'Aix-en-Provence, among others. In Vivaldi's oratorio, Costa arranged the chorus and soloist singers in a fine and highly poetical choreography. By setting a women's collective in a military camp, Costa narrates the myth of Judith and Holofernes as a story of liberation and of visualized continuities between the feminine and the masculine which have been established as hostile poles.

STAATSOPER STUTT GART

PREMIERE

Antonio Vivaldi

Juditha triumphans

Sunday, 16 January 2022, 6 p.m.

Further performances

19 / 22 January 2022

11 February 2022

6 / 10 / 12 March 2022

Conductor **Benjamin Bayl**

Director and Set Designer **Silvia Costa**

Costume Designer **Laura Dondoli**

Light Designer **Bernd Purkrabek**

Chorus **Bernhard Moncado**

Dramaturgy **Franz-Erdmann Meyer-Herder, Antonio Cuenca Ruiz**

Juditha **Rachael Wilson**

Holofernes **Stine Marie Fischer**

Vagaus **Diana Haller**

Abra **Gaia Petrone**

Ozias **Alexandra Urquiola**

Staatsopernchor Stuttgart

Staatsorchester Stuttgart