



PREMIERE OF NEW ORCHESTRAL ARRANGEMENT OF GEORGES BIZET'S FIRST OPERA "LE DOCTEUR MIRACLE"

(15 April 2023) — The premiere of Marco Iannelli's new arrangement of Georges Bizet's "Le docteur Miracle" for chamber ensemble will be premiered at the 2023 French May Arts Festival at a performance on 15 May in a new production co-presented by Opera Hong Kong and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Scored for piano, strings, flute, bassoon and horn, the new arrangement provides an appealing and cost-effective middle ground between piano accompaniment and orchestra.

The one-act comedy "Le docteur Miracle", dating from 1857, was Bizet's first performed opera, the result of being the joint winner (along with Charles Lecocq) of a competition run by Jacques Offenbach for the Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens. The domestic farce has been reset in Hong Kong for this production with new dialogue in English. An additional aria, the tenor serenade "Dans la nuit, ma bien aimée" from Bizet's next opera *Don Procopio*, a selection better known in its later version in *La jolie fille de Perth*.

Iannelli stresses that the new arrangement is not a reduction, but rather "a re-orchestration of the original score. Reducing the number of the musicians allowed me to isolate themes and melodies, emphasize the internal movement of Bizet's original harmonies. Instruments become part of the show, characters without words dialoguing with the singers."

The original score is not without its weaknesses, Iannelli says: "Bizet's was just starting his amazing career, already showing a very original sense of theatre and operatic melodies. But, let's say, there was still room for improvement regarding his orchestration skills. He wrote a score for a quite big orchestra, with material sufficing for a chamber orchestra. The result is a heaviness that doesn't give justice to the inner music lines, otherwise typical for an operatic score. In my new orchestration, I tried to eliminate the superfluous and give a new visibility, better clarity to the original, amazing creativity of the young Bizet."



But in doing the rearrangement, Iannelli found that some initial phrases in the opera's opening trio prefigure the famous "Habanera" from *Carmen*. "Even in this work, written when Bizet was just 18, we can see and hear hints of his future career."

"Le docteur Miracle" will appear in a double bill with a new production of Gaetano Donizetti's "Rita", also with a rearrangement for chamber ensemble by Iannelli. Both productions were developed by the creative team at OperaLab.

Performance details:

15 May 2023 7:30pm

Shaw Auditorium, Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

<https://ias.hkust.edu.hk/events/french-may-opera-le-docteur-miracle>

<https://www.frenchmay.com/en-us/article/233>

Further information on:

- Marco Iannelli: <https://marcoiannelli.com>
- OperaLab: <https://operalab.asia>
- Opera Hong Kong: <https://www.operahongkong.org/>
- French May: <https://www.frenchmay.com/>

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