

ARMIDA

Händel's opera
as a musical collage
defeats the clash
of the cultures

Georg Friedrich Händel's opera ‚Rinaldo‘, which received its world premiere in 1711 in London, is turned upside down in „Armida instead of Rinaldo“, which is narrated like a collage from the oriental point of view. There, Rinaldo finds his existential determination through Armida, the determinant character.

The musical collage ends in a wedding between orient and occident, where Christianity and Islam find each other like siblings: One God, One Love. Rinaldo comes to the orient following the Franconian earl and crusader Balduin de Boulogne. After the conquest of the old town of Edessa (Urfa) he lives out his longings. Stopped by a poisoned arrow he lands in Armidas' and her father's arms, who is a dervish and physician. Instead of fighting saracens, Rinaldo now has to face his prejudices. He falls in love with Armida.

The central motive of this „opera minor“ is the wedding between orient and occident. Executed by the dervish, this wedding is performed exemplarily by Rinaldo and Armida. The opus concentrates then on these three protagonists. This so far unique project is an opus, adapted from a baroque pasticcio, on the basis of Händel arias (above all Rinaldo, Serse and Giulio Cesare) and music from the Ottoman-Turkish cultural environment. Here you can listen to courtly music of Dede Efendi, Ismail Hakki Bey and Sakir Aga as well as to clerical music in the Sufi tradition with lyrics of Yunus Emre and Niyazi Misri. Just as the protagonists, Händel's music and Turkish music face each other with their whole power, but get closer in an fascinating way during the story.

Finally they merge breathtakingly without losing their identities. The musicians of the Pera Ensemble are associated with the tradition of the Sufi music. Mehmet C. Yesilcay originates from an old dervish family, whereas Ahmet Özhan is the artistic and musical director of the Ensemble for historical music Istanbul of the Turkish Ministry of Culture. Therefore it is not a coincidence that Armida is a musical message – the possibility of a vision, a comparison of cultures, the examination of the unknown, the handling of the phenomena of the fear of Turks,

the crusades from another point of view, wars in the name of God or other ideals and a love story, which is still very current, whether in Berlin, Cologne or Istanbul.

Idea and Arrangements: Mehmet C. Yesilcay

Concept and artistic direction:

Mehmet C. Yesilcay and Werner Ehrhardt

Libretto: Rudolf Steinmetz

Simone Kermes, Sopran

Florin C. Ouatu, Countertenor

Ahmet Özhan, Gesang

Pera Ensemble Istanbul

ensemble l'arte del mondo

Werner Ehrhardt, Dirigent

A production of l'arte del mondo – internationale Kulturprojekte