



CIMAROSA

L'Italiana in Londra

Vallone

Tognocchi

Lebow

Samoilov

Bintner

Frankfurter Opern-
und Museumsorchester

Leo Hussain

 Oper Frankfurt



Domenico
CIMAROSA
(1749–1801)

L'Italiana in Londra
(‘The Italian Girl in London’)

Intermezzo in musica in two parts (1778)

Libretto by Giuseppe Petrosellini (1727–1799)

First performance: 28 December 1778 at the Teatro Valle, Rome

Livia	Angela Vallone, Soprano
Madama Brillante	Bianca Tognocchi, Soprano
Sumers	Theo Lebow, Tenor
Milord Arespingh	Iurii Samoilov, Baritone
Don Polidoro	Gordon Bintner, Bass-baritone

Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester

Leo Hussain, Conductor, Fortepiano

1	Sinfonia Allegro con spirito – Andantino – [Allegro]		
Part I			
	Scene 1		
2	No. 2. Introduction: Sempre guerra in questi fogli! (Sumers, Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante, Milord)	6:55	
3	Recitative: Un poco di giudizio (Sumers, Don Polidoro, Milord)		
	Scene 2		
4	No. 3. Cavatina: Straniera, abbandonata (Livia)		
5	Recitative: Cieli... Che volto!... Che beltà! (Milord, Livia)		
	Scene 3		
6	Recitative: Io son pazzo o quella è Livia (Milord, Madama Brillante) –		
	Scene 4 Recitative: Per non farlo inquietare (Madama Brillante, Sumers, Don Polidoro)		
7	No. 4. Duettino: Ho della stima grande (Don Polidoro, Sumers)	2:32	
	Scene 5		
8	Recitative: Non vedo ancor Madama (Livia, Madama Brillante)	1:56	
9	No. 5. Aria: Modesto mi guardava (Madama Brillante)	1:53	
	Scene 6	3:57	
10	Recitative: Ah quanto son tenuta (Livia, Sumers)	1:25	
	Scene 7		
11	Recitative: Si tenti tutto per veder (Milord, Livia, Sumers)	1:35	
12	No. 6. Aria: Venti volte in vita mia (Sumers)	4:10	
	Scene 8		
13	Recitative: Ah, ci vuol flemma (Milord, Livia, Madama Brillante)	1:29	
14	No. 7. Aria: Piano un poco (Livia)	3:46	
	Scene 10		
15	Recitative: T'ha da costar ben caro (Madama Brillante, Don Polidoro)		3:18
16	No. 8. Aria: Dammi la mano, o bella (Don Polidoro)		4:46
	Scene 11		
17	Recitative: Gli voglio bene (Madama Brillante, Sumers, Milord)		2:31
18	No. 9. Aria: Sire, io vengo ai vostri piedi (Milord) – Recitative: Che ne dite? (Madama Brillante, Sumers)		4:56
	Final Scene		
19	No. 10. Finale: L'elitropia vo' cercando (Don Polidoro, Milord, Livia, Madama Brillante, Sumers)		10:23
20	E' più d'un'ora (Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante, Milord, Sumers, Livia)		7:51
Part II			
	Scene 1		
21	No. 11. Introduction: Care mura, a voi d'intorno (Milord, Madama Brillante, Don Polidoro)		2:05
22	Recitative: Abbiate più creanza (Milord, Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante)		1:38
	Scene 2		
23	Recitative: Finge o dice davvero? (Madama Brillante, Don Polidoro)		1:59
24	No. 12. Aria: Voi vedrete in una sala (Madama Brillante, Don Polidoro)		5:12
	Scene 3		
25	Recitative: Se le guerre non cessano (Sumers, Milord) –		
	Scene 4 Recitative: Adesso vo' in giardino (Don Polidoro, Milord, Sumers, Livia)		3:32

26 No. 13. Aria: Vi parlo all'olandese (*Sumers*)

Scene 6

27 Recitative: Credimi, cara amica
(*Livia, Madama Brillante*) –

Scene 7

Recitative: Son due... tre... quattro...
(*Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante, Livia*)

28 No. 14. Aria: O che gusto, che piacere!
(*Don Polidoro*)

Scene 8

29 Recitative: Cosa sarà di me?
(*Livia, Milord, Sumers*) –

Scene 9

Recitative: Signora non ho cor...
(*Madama Brillante, Livia, Milord, Sumers*)

30 No. 15. Scena: Dunque per un infido – (*Livia*)

31 No. 16. Fuggi! Che fò... S'arresta (*Livia*)

6:42

Scene 11

32 Recitative: Dove diavol mi trovo? (*Sumers, Milord*)

33 No. 17. Aria: Van girando per la testa (*Milord*)

Scene 12

34 Recitative: Che rumore! Che chiasso!
(*Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante*)

4:30

35 No. 18. Cavatina: Io voglio a Napoli con voi venire
(*Madama Brillante*)

3:56

36 Scene 13: Recitative: Ah generoso amico (*Livia*)

37 No. 19. Recitative: Ma piano... (*Livia*)

38 No. 20. Duet: Caro amico... (*Livia, Milord*)

Final Scene

39 No. 21. Finale: Giurai di vendicarmi
(*Sumers, Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante*)

2:55

40 Deh, partiam da questo loco

4:14

(*Milord, Livia, Sumers, Madama Brillante*)

4:02

41 Voglio scoprir cos'è

(*Don Polidoro, Madama Brillante, Tutti*)

1:01

3:43

2:48

3:36

0:30

0:48

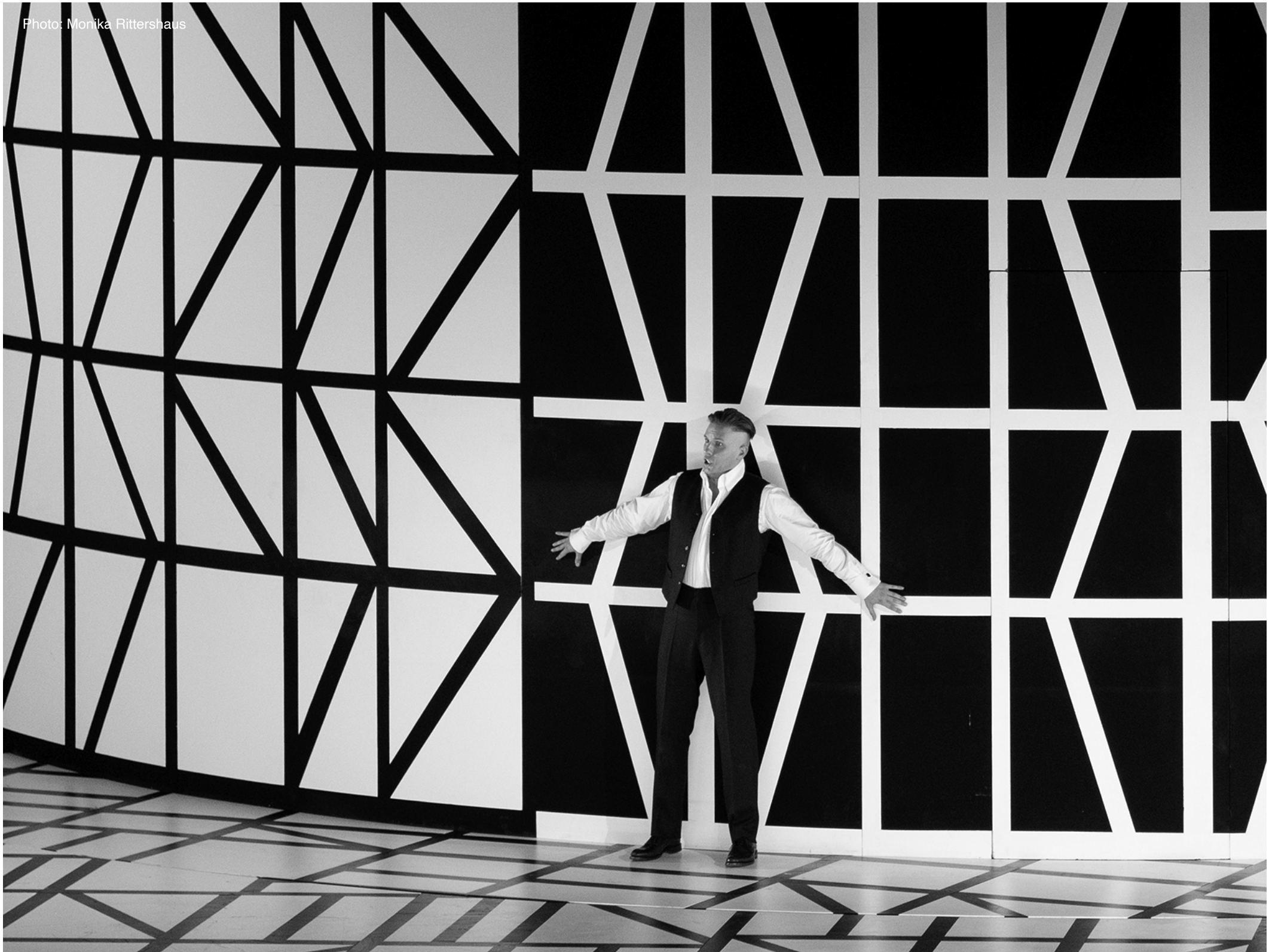
6:05

2:17

1:52

7:34

Photo: Monika Rittershaus



Domenico Cimarosa (1749–1801)

L'Italiana in Londra (1778)

Domenico Cimarosa (b. Aversa, 17 December 1749, d. Venice, 11 January 1801) was one of the last great exponents of the so-called Neapolitan School, and one of the best-known and most-performed composers before the arrival of Rossini on Europe's operatic scene. Cimarosa was first and foremost a composer of operas, and his works were remarkably successful, being staged and re-staged in opera houses across Europe both in Italian and in translation. Having first made his name in all the leading theatres of the Kingdom of Naples, he soon saw his fame spread to central and northern Italy (Venice, in particular). Success at home led to his appointment by Catherine II as *maestro di cappella* and music master at the Russian court in St Petersburg, posts which he held between 1787 and 1791, and then to commissions from Leopold II to write at least three operas (including perhaps his best-known work, *Il matrimonio segreto*, still a stalwart of the repertoire to this day) for the Vienna Burgtheater. Cimarosa also composed in other genres but his non-operatic output is understandably small. Between 1772 and 1801 he composed over 60 operas. The time required to do this and to prepare the works for production left little time for anything else, particularly as new productions of his earlier works also required additional material from time to time. Cimarosa also produced a large body of keyboard works, many of which are only being recorded comparatively recently. Certainly he was no stranger to keyboard instruments – he played the organ professionally and directed his operas from the harpsichord or fortepiano. In 1799 Cimarosa was imprisoned for his revolutionary connections during the occupation of Naples by the French Republic. He escaped the death penalty but was exiled from Naples and went to Venice where he died in 1801 aged 51.

Naxos

When Rehearsals become a Game of Tennis

Conductor Leo Hussain and stage director R.B. Schlather in conversation with dramaturge Mareike Wink

MAREIKE WINK During his lifetime, Cimarosa enjoyed international success and esteem. How much did you know about the composer and his music prior to this production?

R.B. SCHLATHER Absolutely nothing! Apart from the name because of *Il matrimonio segreto*.

LEO HUSSAIN I played his *Double Flute Concerto* when I was a child. And of course people know of his opera *Il matrimonio segreto*, which I have seen once or twice. But apart from that, I didn't actually know anything much about him either.

RBS Which made me all the more curious to discover this work. And it's incredibly charming and sophisticated. The libretto is everything rolled into one: demanding, dark, dirty and very funny. A perfect intermezzo. An impeccable rom-com.

MW The great German writer Goethe wasn't the only fan of Cimarosa – Eugène Delacroix and Stendhal admired him too. Though Stendhal did see one weakness in Cimarosa's music: he said it was too predictable.

LH I'd hate to contradict someone like Stendhal, but I have to say he's totally wrong. It is precisely its unpredictability that makes this an interesting piece. The phrases are shockingly irregular in places. Which doesn't exactly make the music any easier for singers to learn. A lot comes where you don't expect it to – a beat before or after. It's just good music, and discovering it has been, and is, a great pleasure. I did initially have my doubts – Cimarosa, unknown opera... But in the meantime I'm convinced that everywhere would be performing Cimarosa four times in a season if Mozart hadn't come along. The problem is that Cimarosa's works don't compare well with an opera like *Don Giovanni*. But it's not a fair comparison. In any way.

RBS Some of the arias are highly dramatic, with complex forms, profound and very intense. The crises these characters have to deal with are so well written that we really care about them and get carried along.

LH In between there are a large number of *accompagnato* recitatives that feel almost like melodramas. That's something that was extremely unusual in Cimarosa's day. What the opera is famous for – if you associate anything at all with it – is the grand finale at the end of each of the two acts involving all of the characters. We're familiar with that from Mozart and many others of course. But in this respect too, Cimarosa was one step ahead of his time.

MW What is it exactly that makes *L'Italiana in Londra* a 'perfect intermezzo'?

RBS The incredible understanding of comic situations and characters.

LH The opera plays on a host of national stereotypes like the English obsession with tea or the laid-back lifestyle of the Italians. Something that also surprises me is how modern the humour is. We can still laugh every bit as much at the jokes today as when they were written centuries ago. You can't say that of every opera.

RBS The claustrophobia and mania written into this opera interested us right from the get-go. Five people in a hotel which they never leave. There's no outside world; the entire comedy is fuelled by the way these five people are fixated on each other. That situation was easy for us to pick up and run with when we were devising our staging. It was 2020 and the beginning of a particular type of isolation. That makes the central conceit of *L'Italiana in Londra* especially easy for us to identify with just now.

MW What is the significance of the hotel as a setting?

RBS For me, a hotel is a metaphorical, abstract location. A place where you can indulge your imagination, that raises existential questions but is at the same time divorced from reality. You can check in and stay as long as you want. The hotel is like a playground where you can reinvent yourself, experiment with different identities, enjoy yourself or destroy yourself, with the 'weird bloke at the bar'. You can also get stranded in a hotel, for example when the next flight has been cancelled. And sometimes hotel guests are thrown together by circumstances.

MW How would you describe the group of people thrown together in this opera?

LH The music delineates them all very clearly, as though it were painting them in primary colours. But that doesn't mean they're lacking in depth. Even a red, green and blue cartoon character can be profound and can move you. Although the characters in *L'Italiana in Londra* are drawn in primary colours, their interplay and the way they communicate with each other becomes correspondingly more complex. There's this Dutch businessman who complains about the reporting of events and would rather concern himself with the economy than with wars. And then there's Arespingh, the scion of an English noble family who tries for all he's worth to escape his father's control.

RBS The Italian tourist Don Polidoro wants to enjoy himself but finds London, the people he meets there and the tea awful. The proprietress of the hotel, Madama Brillante, is a kind of Despina character. She suffers from a broken heart and loathes men. She's the only woman working in her hotel, and she dreams of her own escape from reality, ideally in Naples. Which of course is why Don Polidoro catches her eye. And then of course there's the Italian girl who gives the opera its title. Livia has been living in Madama Brillante's establishment for two years and has created a second, French identity for herself, going by the rather un-French name of 'Enrichetta'.

MW What were your greatest challenges working on this intermezzo?

RBS The most difficult job was teasing the humanity out of the intrusive stereotypes found in the opera. If the characters become real people to me, I can understand their situations and find them hilarious or moving... In our case this voyage of discovery was very much associated with the question of whether the opera needed a realistic set and costumes. In the end we plumped for a space that's very abstract, artificial and burlesque and which, like the costumes, picks up on the humorous nudge-nudge-wink-wink and absurdity of *L'Italiana in Londra*. Actor-manager Brian Rix's countless West End farces and slapstick comedies were a huge inspiration to us. And we were also influenced by the British artist Linder Sterling, who's famous for her radical feminist, ultra-sexy, ironic photomontages. And then there are a couple of absurd Pythonesque moments. I loved the sitcom *Fawlty Towers* when I was a kid.

LH Everything is a touch claustrophobic, and this affects the characters' nerves. In the second half of the opera they all go slightly crazy, and the abstractness of the space makes that all the more obvious.

RBS In a way, the space allows us to up the ante right across the board.

LH I think the greatest challenge with any unfamiliar work is becoming really familiar with the music. It should feel as though we've played nothing else for the last 20 years. It's the opposite of what you're trying to do with very popular works, i.e. make them sound fresh, as though they've only just been discovered. The opera, the comedy, the timing – all that works when it feels effortless and natural to everyone involved and appears spontaneous and 'unrehearsed'.

MW How do you find working together?

LH I think there's nothing worse for a conductor or stage director than starting a fresh project with a preconceived, or cut-and-dried notion of how something should be. Some of the best musical comments come from the directorial side. You lot simply have a different way of hearing things. I don't like this 'separation of powers', it's just plain wrong. I'd say that you can tell 10 to 15 seconds after curtain-up whether the stage director and the music director have worked together or not. We should all be open to swapping ideas. With an opera like *L'Italiana in Londra*, we need to collaborate to develop humour and a light touch. That works fantastically with R.B., and it's really fun! Here, developing ideas is more like a game of tennis.

RBS And if the person sitting behind us in rehearsal laughs, we know: Oh, that's working. Leo has a strong sense of theatre. That makes our working together all the more vibrant and the audience experience of the music correspondingly more exciting.

*Interview courtesy of Oper Frankfurt
English translation: Susan Baxter*

Synopsis

Part I

Madama Brillante hosts the Dutchman Sumers and Italian bon vivant Don Polidoro in her London hostelry. While one flaunts himself as an important international dynamic businessman, the other longs for Italy, where you can laugh, be loud and above all eat well and cheaply.

For some time now Livia, a daughter from a good Italian family, has set up home with Madama Brillante. She was abandoned by her beloved Milord Arespingh two years ago and has been looking for him ever since, as 'Mademoiselle Enrichetta from Marseille', word of whose beauty has reached Sumers and Don Polidoro's ears. Livia, and keen to marry Madama Brillante, quickly became close friends.

Arespingh suddenly turns up at the hostelry. The aristocratic scion, in desperation, tells Don Polidoro that he had to leave his beloved behind in Genoa: his father sent him to Jamaica and then ordered him back to London, to marry an English noblewoman. The wedding has already been announced in the papers.

Livia is shocked when she encounters Arespingh. Torn between happiness, longing, pain, mistrust and fury she's determined to conceal her identity and take revenge. Arespingh tries, in vain, to explain and win her back. He intends to use his best contacts to prove his innocence.

In the meantime Madama Brillante tells Don Polidoro, who's dying to meet the mysterious 'Mademoiselle Enrichetta from Marseille', about the magic qualities of heliotropes: the mysterious stranger uses one to vanish, anyone who had one could also disappear whenever they wanted... Don Polidoro must get his hands on a heliotrope!

Part II

The situation escalates – with Don Polidoro, over the moon because he thinks he's found a heliotrope – at its centre. He wants to marry 'invisible Enrichetta', a phenomenon Madama Brillante's instilled in his mind.

Livia has increasing doubts about Arespingh's guilt but can't bring herself to trust the desperate man completely. Sumers offers Livia his protection when he sees them having an argument. Then Madama Brillante announces that Livia's going to be arrested, on orders from on high. Sumers generously uses his fortune to help Livia, but forbids her to leave his house.

Madama Brillante, who's still stringing him along about heliotropes, and Don Polidoro become closer.

Milord Arespingh manages to change his father's mind and avoid marrying Milady Lindane. Livia, whose arrest warrant has been rescinded, can't resist her love for him any longer, and the couple, and imminent bride and groom, are reunited at last.

Amidst all the joy over this happy outcome, Madama Brillante confesses to Don Polidoro that she was pulling his leg about heliotropes. Another couple have found happiness – a wedding's not out of the question here either.

Synopsis courtesy of Oper Frankfurt

Wenn die Probe zum Tennisspiel wird

Dirigent Leo Hussain und Regisseur R.B. Schlather im Gespräch mit Mareike Wink

MAREIKE WINK Cimarosa war zu Lebzeiten international bekannt und geschätzt. Wie viel wusstet ihr vor unserer Produktion über den Komponisten und seine Musik?

R.B. SCHLATHER Absolut nichts! Bis auf seinen Namen wegen *Il matrimonio segreto*.

LEO HUSSAIN Ich habe als Kind sein Flöten-konzert gespielt. Und klar, man kennt seine Oper *Il matrimonio segreto*, die ich ein-, zweimal gesehen habe. Aber ansonsten tatsächlich auch so gut wie nichts.

RBS Umso neugieriger war ich, dieses Werk zu entdecken. Und es ist wahnsinnig charmant und raffiniert. Das Libretto ist alles zugleich: anspruchsvoll, düster, dreckig und sehr witzig. Ein perfektes Intermezzo, eine perfekte »Romantische Komödie«.

MW Nicht nur Goethe war ein großer Fan von Cimarosa, auch Eugène Delacroix und Stendhal schätzten ihn. Dennoch sah Stendhal eine Schwäche in Cimarosas Musik: Sie sei zu vorhersehbar.

LH Ich möchte ungern jemandem wie Stendhal widersprechen, aber ich muss sagen: Da irrt er sich komplett. Gerade die Unvorhersehbarkeit macht das Stück interessant. Die Phrasen sind zum Teil schockierend unregelmäßig. Etwas, das den Sängern das Lernen der Musik nicht gerade leichter macht. Vieles passiert dann, wenn du es eben nicht erwartest – einen Takt später oder früher. Es ist einfach gute Musik, und es war und ist eine große Freude, sie zu entdecken. Tatsächlich war ich anfangs etwas im Zweifel – Cimarosa, unbekannte Oper ... Aber inzwischen bin ich mir sicher, dass wir Cimarosa überall

viermal pro Saison spielen würden, wenn es Mozart nicht gegeben hätte. Das Problem ist, dass sich Cimarosas Werke schwer vergleichen lassen mit einem *Don Giovanni* zum Beispiel. Und das ist kein fairer Vergleich, für nichts.

RBS Die Arien sind teilweise extrem dramatisch, formal komplex, tiefgründig und sehr intensiv. Die Krisen, die die Figuren zu bewältigen haben, sind so differenziert geschrieben, dass sie uns wirklich angehen und mitnehmen.

LH Dazwischen gibt es eine Vielzahl von Accompagnato-Rezitativen, die fast schon wie Melodramen daherkommen. Etwas, das für Cimarosas Zeit äußerst ungewöhnlich ist. Wofür das Werk, wenn es einem etwas sagt, bekannt ist: die großen Finali an den beiden Aktschlüssen, die alle Figuren einschließt. Wir kennen das zwar von Mozart und vielen anderen. Aber Cimarosa war auch hier seiner Zeit einen Schritt voraus.

MW Was genau macht *L'Italiana in Londra* zu einem »perfekten Intermezzo«?

RBS Das unglaubliche Gespür für komische Situationen und Charaktere.

LH Das Stück spielt mit einer Menge nationaler Klischees, wie beispielsweise der englischen Besessenheit von Tee oder der gelassenen italienischen Lebensart. Was mich auch überrascht, ist die Aktualität des Humors. Wir können heute noch genauso über die Scherze lachen, die vor Jahrhunderten geschrieben wurden. Und das kann man nicht für jede Oper behaupten.

RBS Die Klaustrophobie und Manie, die hier eingeschrieben sind, haben uns von Anfang an interessiert: fünf Menschen in einem Hotel, das sie nie verlassen. Es gibt keine Außenwelt, die ganze Komödie speist sich aus der Fixiertheit dieser fünf aufeinander. Eine Situation, an die wir in der Zeit unserer Inszenierungs-entwicklung gut anknüpfen konnten: Es war 2020 und der Beginn einer speziellen Art von Isolation. Der Kern von *L'Italiana in Londra* rückt uns also gerade jetzt besonders nahe.

MW Welche Bedeutung kommt dem Hotel als Ort zu?

RBS Ein Hotel ist für mich ein metaphorischer und abstrakter Ort, ein Ort der Fantasie, existenziell und frei schwebend zugleich ... Du kannst einchecken und so lange bleiben, wie du willst. Das Hotel ist wie ein Spielplatz, auf dem du dich neu erfinden, mit Identitäten spielen, dich amüsieren oder auch zerstören kannst, mit »dem komischen Typen an der Bar«. In einem Hotel kann man aber auch festsitzen, beispielsweise wenn gerade der nächste Flug gecancelt wurde. Und manchmal werden Hotelgäste zu einer Art Schicksalsgemeinschaft.

MW Wie würdet ihr die Schicksalsgemeinschaft in diesem Werk beschreiben?

LH Sie sind gerade in der Musik allesamt sehr klar gezeichnet, wie mit Grundfarben, was jedoch keinesfalls heißt, dass sie keine Tiefe haben. Auch ein rot-grün-blau gezeichneter Cartoon kann tiefgründig sein und berühren. Obwohl die Charaktere in *L'Italiana in Londra* gewissermaßen in Grundfarben gestaltet sind, werden ihr Spiel und ihre Kommunikation miteinander umso komplexer. Es gibt diesen holländischen Businessman, der sich über die Berichterstattung beschwert und sich statt mit Kriegen lieber mit der Wirtschaft beschäftigen will. Dann den englischen Adelsspross Aresping, der mit aller Kraft versucht, dem Kontrollzwang seines Vaters zu entkommen.

RBS Der italienische Tourist Don Polidoro will sich amüsieren, findet London, die Leute, die er dort trifft, und Tee aber schrecklich. Die Hotelbesitzerin Madama Brillante, eine Art Despina, leidet an gebrochenem Herzen und hasst Männer. Sie ist die einzige Arbeitende in ihrem Hotel und träumt von ihrer eigenen Ausflucht aus der Realität, am liebsten in Neapel, was sie natürlich ein Auge auf Don Polidoro werfen lässt. Und dann gibt es natürlich das italienische Mädchen, dem das Werk seinen Titel verdankt: Livia, die seit zwei Jahren bei Madama Brillante lebt und sich eine zweite französische Identität zugelegt hat unter dem nicht sehr französischen Namen: Enrichetta.

Photo: Monika Rittershaus



Photo: Monika Rittershaus



MW Was waren die größten Herausforderungen in eurer Arbeit an diesem Intermezzo?

RBS Die schwierigste Aufgabe war es für uns, Menschen aus den überpräsenten Stereotypen dieses Werkes herauszuschälen. Wenn ich Figuren als Menschen erfahre, kann ich ihre Situationen verstehen, sie saukomisch finden oder von ihnen berührt werden ... Mit dieser Entdeckungsreise war für uns die Frage verbunden, ob dieses Stück eine konkret ausformulierte Ausstattung braucht. Schließlich sind wir bei einem Raum gelandet, der sehr abstrakt, künstlich und burlesk ist und ebenso wie die Kostüme den Sinn für Humor, das Augenzwinkern, das Absurde von *L'Italiana in Londra* aufgreift. Eine große Inspiration dabei waren die unzähligen West End Theatre-Farce, Klipp-Klapp-Komödien des britischen Schauspieler-Impresarios Brian Rix. Auch die britische Künstlerin Linder Sterling, die für ihre radikalen feministischen, supersexy und ironischen Collagen bekannt ist, hat uns beeinflusst. Und dann gibt es ein paar dieser absurden Monty Python-Momente – ihre Sitcom *Fawlty Towers* habe ich als Kind geliebt.

LH Bei allem schwingt die Klaustrophobie mit, die sich auch im Nervensystem der Figuren ausbreitet. Im zweiten Teil des Stücks werden alle etwas verrückt, was vor der Abstraktheit des Raumes umso mehr hervortritt.

RBS Der Raum erlaubt uns gewissermaßen, in allem noch einen draufzusetzen.

LH Ich denke, die größte Herausforderung bei jedem unbekannten Werk ist es, eine Vertrautheit mit der Musik zu erreichen. Es sollte sich so anfühlen, als hätten wir die letzten 20 Jahre nichts anderes gespielt. Das Gegenteil von dem, was du mit sehr populären Werken versuchst: dass sie frisch und wie neu entdeckt klingen. Das Stück, die Komödie, das Timing – all das funktioniert dann, wenn es sich für alle mühelos, natürlich anfühlt und »ungeprobt«, spontan wirkt.

MW Wie erlebt ihr eure Zusammenarbeit?

LH Ich denke, es gibt nichts Schlimmeres für Dirigent*innen oder Regisseur*innen, als mit einer vorgefertigten oder sogar abgeschlossenen Meinung darüber, wie etwas zu sein hat, ein neues Projekt zu beginnen. Einige der besten musikalischen Anmerkungen kommen von Regie-Seite. Ihr hört einfach anders. Ich mag diese »Gewaltenteilung« nicht und sie ist schlichtweg falsch. Ich würde behaupten, dass man 10–15 Sekunden, nachdem der Vorhang hochgegangen ist, sagen kann, ob Regie und musikalische Leitung miteinander gearbeitet haben oder nicht. Wir alle sollten offen dafür sein, Ideen auszutauschen. Bei einem Stück wie *L'Italiana in Londra* geht es darum, gemeinsam Humor und Leichtigkeit zu entwickeln, was mit R.B. fantastisch funktioniert und großen Spaß macht! Das Ideenentwickeln hat hier vielmehr etwas von Tennisspielen.

RBS Und wenn die Person, die in der Probe hinter uns sitzt, lacht, wissen wir: Oh, das funktioniert! Leo hat einen starken Theatersinn. Das macht die Zusammenarbeit umso lebendiger und das Musikerlebnis für das Publikum umso aufregender.

Handlung

Erster Teil

Madama Brillante beherbergt in ihrer Londoner Pension den Niederländer Sumers und den italienischen Lebemann Don Polidoro. Während der eine den seriösen und international agierenden Geschäftsmann gibt, sehnt sich der andere nach Italien zurück, wo man lachen, laut sein und vor allem gut und günstig essen kann.

Seit einiger Zeit hat sich bei Madama Brillante auch Livia, eine Tochter aus gutem italienischen Hause, eingerichtet. Vor zwei Jahren wurde sie von ihrem Geliebten, Milord Aresping, sitzen gelassen. Seither ist sie als »Mademoiselle Enrichetta aus Marseille«, deren Schönheit sich bis zu Sumers und Don Polidoro herumgesprochen hat, auf der Suche nach ihm. Längst haben sich Livia und die heiratswillige Madama Brillante angefreundet.

Plötzlich taucht Aresping in der Pension auf. Der Adelsspross ist völlig verzweifelt und erzählt Don Polidoro, dass er seine Geliebte in Genua zurücklassen musste: Sein Vater hatte ihn von dort nach Jamaika geschickt und schließlich nach London zurückbeordert, um ihn mit einer englischen Lady zu verheiraten. Die Hochzeit wird bereits in der Zeitung bekannt gegeben.

Livia ist bestürzt, als sie Aresping kurz darauf begegnet. Hin- und hergerissen zwischen Freude, Sehnsucht, Schmerz, Misstrauen und Wut will sie sich nicht zu erkennen geben und sich an ihm rächen. Aresping versucht erfolglos, sich zu erklären und sie zurückzugewinnen. Er will seine besten Kontakte spielen lassen, um seine Unschuld zu beweisen.

Währenddessen erzählt Madama Brillante Don Polidoro, der unbedingt die geheimnisvolle »Mademoiselle Enrichetta« treffen will, von der magischen Kraft eines Heliotrop: Dieser Stein lasse nicht nur die mysteriöse Fremde unsichtbar werden, auch jeder andere könne sich so auf Wunsch verschwinden lassen ... So einen Heliotrop muss Don Polidoro selbst haben!

Zweiter Teil

Die Situation unter allen Beteiligten schaukelt sich immer weiter hoch – mittendrin Don Polidoro, der glaubt, einen Heliotrop gefunden zu haben und außer sich ist vor Begeisterung. Er will die »unsichtbare Enrichetta« heiraten, mit deren Vorstellung Madama Brillante ihn an der Nase herumführt.

Livia zweifelt zunehmend an Arespings Schuld, kann sich aber nicht durchringen, dem Verzweifelten ganz zu vertrauen. Als Sumers eine Auseinandersetzung der beiden beobachtet, bietet er Livia seinen Schutz an. Da verkündet Madama Brillante, dass Livia auf Anordnung von ganz oben verhaftet werden soll. Grosszügig setzt Sumers sein Vermögen ein, um Livia zu helfen. Er untersagt ihr allerdings, sein Haus zu verlassen.

Madama Brillante, die ihren Spaß mit dem Heliotrop weiterhin aufrechterhält, und Don Polidoro kommen sich näher.

Milord Aresping konnte seinen Vater tatsächlich umstimmen und die Hochzeit mit Milady Lindane abwenden. Schließlich kann auch Livia, deren Arrest kurz darauf aufgegeben wird, ihrer Liebe für ihn nicht mehr widerstehen und das Paar, das wohl bald zum Brautpaar wird, ist endlich wieder vereint.

Inmitten der Freude über den glücklichen Ausgang des Ganzen gesteht Madama Brillante Don Polidoro, dass sie ihn mit dem Heliotrop an der Nase herumgeführt hat. Auch hier haben sich zwei gefunden – Hochzeit ebenfalls nicht ausgeschlossen.

Oper Frankfurt



Photo: Monika Rittershaus

Angela Vallone

Photo: Barbara Aumüller



American soprano Angela Vallone was a member of the Oper Frankfurt ensemble until 2023/24, where she appeared in *Die Zauberflöte*, *La gazzetta* and *Dido and Aeneas*, among many others. Vallone has performed with the Sinfonieorchester St. Gallen in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*; the Gürzenich-Chor Köln in Handel's *Saul*; *La clemenza di Tito* in the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, Moscow; and *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Teatro Municipal de Santiago. While studying at The Juilliard School she participated in The Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. A scholarship holder of the Tanglewood Music Centre and a participant in the Mozart Residency at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, she was awarded First Prize at the 2017 Gerda Lissner Foundation International Vocal Competition.

www.angelavallone.com

Bianca Tognocchi

Photo: Barbara Aumüller



Oper Frankfurt ensemble member Bianca Tognocchi made her debut in the 2019/20 season as Gilda (*Rigoletto*), a role she reprised in Frankfurt as well as at several Italian opera houses in 2024/25. In the same season she also appeared as Beauté (*Guerçœur*) and Bianca (*Bianca e Falliero*), and gave a recital in the Holzfoyer at Oper Frankfurt. Guest engagements have taken the Italian soprano to the Teatro Filarmonico, Arena di Verona, Teatro Petruzzelli, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Regio Torino, Teatro Donizetti and the Tiroler Festspiele Erl. Before joining the Frankfurt ensemble, Tognocchi was a member of the ensemble of Oper Leipzig. She studied at the Conservatorio di Musica 'Giuseppe Verdi' in Milan.

www.biancatognocchi.com

Theo Lebow



Photo: Barbara Aumüller

American tenor Theo Lebow has already appeared in numerous roles at Oper Frankfurt, including the title role in Rossini's *Otello*, Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte* and the Painter in Berg's *Lulu*. An Oper Frankfurt ensemble member, he has also made guest appearances as Lanciotto (*Francesca da Rimini*) and Contareno (*Bianca e Falliero*) at the Tiroler Festspiele Erl. Recent highlights include Desiré (*Fedora*), Baron von Campotasso (*Die Banditen*), Vicomte Cascada (*The Merry Widow*), Tom Snout (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Prince Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*). He has also appeared in *La Betulia liberata*, *Il trovatore*, *Billy Budd* and the world premiere of Arnulf Herrmann's *Der Mieter*.

Iurii Samoilov



Photo: Tatyana Bogashova

A former member of Oper Frankfurt's ensemble (2012 to 2022), Ukrainian baritone Iurii Samoilov has recently appeared at leading opera houses, festivals and alongside prestigious orchestras across Europe and the United States, including The Metropolitan Opera, Teatro Real in Madrid, Opéra national de Paris, Salzburger Festspiele, the BBC Proms, The Cleveland Orchestra and the Orchestre de Paris. Samoilov was a finalist at the 2017 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and a recipient of the Päsel Foundation Award.

www.iuriisamoilov.com

Gordon Bintner



Photo: Edmond Choo Photography

Canadian bass-baritone Gordon Bintner has garnered international acclaim for his diverse repertoire, which spans Baroque, Romantic and contemporary works. He has appeared at the Opéra national de Paris, Royal Ballet and Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Opera Australia and Oper Frankfurt under conductors including Antonio Pappano, Antonello Manacorda, Pablo Heras-Casado, Kent Nagano and Henrik Nánási. Roles include Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Oronte (Charpentier's *Médée*), Albert (*Werther*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Figaro and Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Don Giovanni, Argante (*Rinaldo*), Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*), Eugene Onegin, Count (Schreker's *Der ferne Klang*) and Junior (*A Quiet Place*).

www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/gordon-bintner

Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester



Photo: Sophia Hegewald

The Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester, headed by Thomas Guggeis, who has served as director general of music at Oper Frankfurt since 2023/24, is one of the most important orchestras in the German-speaking world. In 2025, the orchestra was voted 'Orchestra of the Year' for the fifth time in the critics' poll conducted by *Opernwelt* magazine. Previous directors have included such luminaries as Sir Georg Solti, Christoph von Dohnányi, Michael Gielen, Sylvain Cambreling, Paolo Carignani and Sebastian Weigle, who held the post from 2008 to 2023. The name of the orchestra goes back to the Frankfurt Museum Society, for which it was founded towards the end of the 18th century. Since then the orchestra has also appeared as a concert orchestra in the 'museum concerts' organised by the Museum Society.

www.oper-frankfurt.de

Leo Hussain



Photo: Marco Borggreve

During the 2025/26 season, conductor Leo Hussain's engagements have included *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and *Saul* for the Semperoper Dresden, *Mitridate, re di Ponto* and Weinberg's *The Passenger* for the Oper Frankfurt, and concerts with the Opéra Orchestre national Montpellier and George Enescu Philharmonic. Previous opera highlights include *Die Zauberflöte* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, *Eugene Onegin* for the Bayerische Staatsoper, *Capriccio* for the Santa Fe Opera, *Tosca* for the San Francisco Opera and *The Rape of Lucretia* for the Glyndebourne Festival. He has also appeared with the Hamburgische Staatsoper, and at the Theater an der Wien and Staatstheater Hannover, as well as with the English, Welsh, Gothenburg, Norwegian and Royal Swedish national operas. Concert work has included engagements with the Hamburg, Bamberg and Vienna symphony orchestras, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Auckland Philharmonia and the West Australian, Tasmanian, NHK and Tokyo Metropolitan symphony orchestras. He made his debut at the Salzburger Festspiele in 2024 conducting the Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, and is principal guest conductor of the George Enescu Philharmonic.

Photo: Monika Rittershaus



Domenico Cimarosa, one of the last great exponents of the Neapolitan School, was also one of the most-performed opera composers before the arrival of Rossini. He composed over 60 such works and was esteemed from Venice to St Petersburg where he was appointed to the Russian Court. *L'Italiana in Londra* ('The Italian Girl in London') is a charming and sophisticated intermezzo that displays an incredible understanding of comic situations and characters, satirising different cultural stereotypes that are as identifiable today as they were in the 18th century. Humour and wit abound in this acclaimed production.

} Oper Frankfurt

Domenico
CIMAROSA
(1749–1801)

L'Italiana in Londra
(‘The Italian Girl in London’)

Intermezzo in musica in two parts (1778)
Libretto by Giuseppe Petrosellini (1727–1799)

Livia Angela Vallone, Soprano
Madama Brillante Bianca Tognocchi, Soprano
Sumers Theo Lebow, Tenor
Milord Arespingh Iurii Samoilov, Baritone
Don Polidoro Gordon Bintner, Bass-baritone

Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester
Leo Hussain, Conductor, Fortepiano

1 Sinfonia 6:55 2–20 Part I 72:32 21–41 Part II 71:00

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet

The Italian libretto can be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/660586.htm

Recorded: 24, 30 October and 5 November 2021 at Oper Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Producer and editor: Teresa Kunz • Engineer: Felix Dreher

Wireless microphone technicians: Margit Baruschka, Tobias Hamann • Booklet notes courtesy of Oper Frankfurt

A Naxos production in co-production with Oper Frankfurt

Directed by R.B. Schlather • Cover photo by Monika Rittershaus

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