

## Sets for *Parsifal* by Richard Wagner, 2007

Directed by Federico Tiezzi, music by Richard Wagner, costumes by Giovanna Buzzi, produced by the Teatro di San Carlo, Naples.

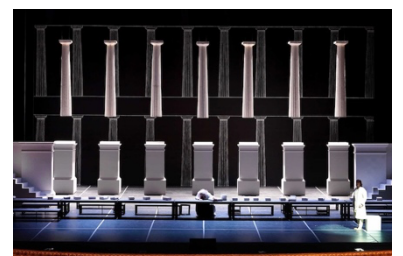
First performance: Naples, Teatro di San Carlo, 2, 6, 9, 12 and 15 December 2007 (conductor Asher Fisch).

Other performances: Turin, Teatro Regio, 26, 27, 29, 30 January and 1, 3, 5, 6 February 2011 (conductor Bertrand de Billy).

“The entire work is set in an ideal space, a geology, astronomy and archaeology Museum... a Museum of ‘spiritual sciences’ – I should say – where the finds handed down by History appear to be carefully and respectfully preserved but, now rendered unrecognisable by Time, reviewed and catalogued by the eyes of today. The stage, that is to say, reflects fidelity to, almost the observance of, the codes of ‘theatre’ tradition. The opposite, in other words, of certain recent visions of Wagner’s works, staged with an eye to vulgar updating or an unnecessarily complicated spectacularization replete with special effects.

The trees (and columns) which exchange roles and alternate in appearing as ‘exposed works’ are not set on the pedestals placed there to support them: they remain suspended in midair, in correspondence to pre-established points but without touching them, eluding the call of the force of gravity. And again it is Time that replaces the blood of Christ (the Grail is condensed into a ray of light which crosses the stage space like an immaterial flash of lighting). The character of Parsifal also calls at times for its own counter-figure and is substituted by the statue of Hermes of Praxiteles. From warrior to messenger: his body (and soul) depict the topicality (and perennial nature) of the ‘classical’. Starting with the mute conversation in the prelude which announces the ‘mutation’ of a figure into its equal, right down to the sublime and statuary perfection achieved in the end by the reflected and repeated image of the messenger of the gods as ideal model.

The vanishing point on the ground, a chessboard expressly accentuated and underscored, leads us centre stage where the various moments of the representation gradually converge: the images of figures that come and go in the centre of the ‘exhibition space’ evoke a ‘beyond’ that we may only glimpse. Frames, pedestals and backdrops illustrate and gather the fragments of a ‘chamber’ landscape, of a panorama where synthesis and dizziness contend in the task of introducing us to hearing the work in the rooms of the Museum.





P.S. Lastly, I'd like to mention and thank the guests who generously allowed their images to be reproduced in my set projects:

- the tree drawn by Claude Lorrain on a sheet currently at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris;
- the columns that decorate the atrium of Villa Pignatelli Cortes in Naples;
- Goethe's house in Weimar;
- the life-size swan from a 17th century Dutch painting;
- and of course and above all, the figure of Hermes of Praxiteles.

Certainly neither the tree nor even less the columns, the walls, the painting and the statue can answer my grateful thought, but confirmation has already arrived and the dialogue was begun some time ago...

#### *Prelude*

Absorbed figure, from behind or from the side: in the centre of the perspective drawing, beyond a screen, the statue of Hermes appears. Increasing glow from the background of the stage, still enveloped in darkness.

#### *Act I*

All black, trees (later columns) suspended above the pedestals. Two backdrops, a long table from one side of the stage to the other, like a Last Supper.

#### *Act II*

Indoor space, centre, a white floor superimposed on a black one, 'desertification' effect.

#### *Act III*

As in scene one act one, but all white: the trees (and columns) set on pedestals. Clear, bright stage (yellow screen?). Parsifal as 'model': two statues (twice the same statue of Hermes) set along the central axis of the space seem to celebrate the 'dialogue between equals' announced in the prelude" (G. Paolini, "Note alle scene del Parsifal di Richard Wagner", 2007).

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