At the National Palace of Queluz, the modern world premiere of “L'Isola Disabitata - Serenata per musica”

- Modern world premiere under the musical direction of Massimo Mazzeo
- Serenade purpose composed for the Palace of Queluz in 1767
- Composed by David Perez with a libretto by Pietro Metastasio

Sintra, 21st May 2015 – On 26th June, Parques de Sintra and Divino Sospiro - Centre of Portuguese Eighteenth-Century Musical Studies (DS-CEMSP) present the modern world premiere of “The Uninhabited Isle - Serenade in music” by the composer David Perez at the National Palace of Queluz.

This performance by Divino Sospiro, with musical orchestration by Massimo Mazzeo, renders continuity to the cycles of music that Parques de Sintra has staged in the Palaces of Sintra within the framework of its initiative to promote these monuments through music alongside attracting new audiences. As regards the serenades specifically composed for the Palace of Queluz, a national genre par excellence, this is the first in a series due for restoration and performance. This research project also incorporates study of the context prevailing around their creation, their respective performances and their insightful edition.

David Perez was one of the most relevant composers on the European musical panorama of the second half of the 18th century. "Composer to the Royal Court and Master to His Royal Highnesses", as from 1752 he conducted the musical life of the Portuguese Court through to his death in 1778. His works influenced the majority of Portuguese composers of the period. Many of the leading names, including João Cordeiro da Silva, João de Sousa Carvalho and Luciano Xavier dos Santos, were his self-acknowledged disciples.

This Serenade was written for presentation at the Palace of Queluz, the residence of Prince Pedro and future Queen Maria I, favourite students of David Perez who established a close bond with them. This proximity between the Portuguese royal couple and the Neapolitan composer is reflected in his presence on the painted canvas ceiling in the Ambassadors Room in the National Palace of Queluz.

The libretto for this Serenade was written in 1752 by the greatest poet for music of the 18th century, Pietro Metastasio. Various composers adopted this work to great effect. In addition to its almost realist plot, the narrative traces the maritime voyage to the far distant West Indies and would have at the time triggered significant interest and especially among Portuguese audiences.

Of this piece, there are only two surviving musical scores. One is held by the Library of the National Palace of Ajuda and contains the following note originally in Italian: “…to be presented in the Royal Town of Queluz in the year of 1767”, in addition to a printed copy of the libretto conserved by the National Library of Portugal; whilst the other score is in the Library of the San Pietro a Majella Musical Conservatory in Naples.
The insightful edition of this script was the work of Iskrena Yordanova (DS-CEMSP).

The Serenade, in its concerto version, will be performed by the Divino Sospirò orchestra with Massimo Mazzeo conducting and also featuring the sopranos Joana Seara, Francesca Aspromonte and Francesco Divito and the tenor Bruno Almeida.

The soprano Joana Seara, who in opera has performed numerous roles ranging from Monteverdi to Puccini, from Verdi to Francisco António de Almeyda, here performs the role of Constanza.

The soprano Francesca Aspromonte, a veteran of such stages as the Opéra Royal de Versailles, the Opéra de Vichy, Parco della Musica Auditorium in Rome, the Bozar in Brussels, the Opéra National de Montpellier as well as starring at renowned festivals including the Ambronay Festival, the Aix-en-Provence Festival and the Musikfest Bremen, plays the character of Silvia.

Francesco Divito, an extraordinary case for never having experienced any change to his voice (he is a natural soprano with the breathing capacity of male lungs), interprets the role of Enrico.

The tenor Bruno Almeida, one of the founders of Project Alba dedicated to promoting lyrical song and the Portuguese guitar who has already performed with the National Theatre of São Carlos Choir and a reserve member of the Gulbenkian Choir, here takes on the role of Gernando.

The 18th century was one of the most important periods in the history of Portuguese music and reflecting a major investment by the royal powers whether in terms of production and performance or through strategies that extended to the importing of musicians and repertoires and as well as providing training to performers and composers. The Court frequently gathered at the Palace of Queluz to attend performances of serenades, cavalhada horse-back performances and fire-work displays. Music always played a central role in all these festivities and especially over the period between 1752 and 1786. Both before and after the construction of the Opera House in 1778, this was the site of the performance of dozens of serenades and operas.

Public information

The concert takes place on Friday, 26th June at 6pm in the Throne Room in the National Palace of Queluz. Tickets cost €10 and are on sale at Parques de Sintra ticket offices, online and at FNAC, Worten, El Corte Inglés, MEO Arena, Media Markt and Sintra and Cascais Tourism Offices. The serenade is recommended to those aged over 6.

"The Uninhabited Isle – Serenade in music" is co-financed by POR Lisbon – the Regional Operational Program and counts on Antena 2 as its media partner.

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About Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua

Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua, S.A. (PSML) is a state-owned limited company with exclusively public capital that was created in 2000 following the recognition by UNESCO of the Cultural Landscape of Sintra as a World Heritage Site. The company was created to assemble the public institutions responsible for preserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage in Sintra.
PSML has been entrusted with the management of the State's main properties in the area. Because it does not resort to the State Budget, PSML depends entirely on proceeds from the tickets sale, shops, cafeterias and hiring of venues for events, in order to restore, maintain and promote the heritage it manages.

In 2013, the natural and cultural heritage managed by PSML (the Park and Palace of Pena, the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz, the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the Moorish Castle, the Palace and Gardens of Monserrate, the Convent of the Capuchos and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art) welcomed approximately 1,700,000 visitors, over 90% of whom were from outside of Portugal.

The shareholders of PSML are the Directorate General of Treasury and Finance (Direção Geral do Tesouro e Finanças - representing the State), the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Biodiversity (Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e Biodiversidade - ICNB), the Portuguese Tourism Board (Turismo de Portugal) and the Municipality of Sintra (Câmara Municipal de Sintra - CMS).

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