

LByron

-un estiu sense estiu-

A summer without summer

Agustí Charles

òpera in two acts  
libreto by Marc Rosich

World premiere

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# LByron – Lord Byron

## *A Summer without Summer*

Agustí Charles

Opera in two acts

Libretto by Marc Rosich

*LByron, un estiu sense estiu*, opera of the Catalan composer, Agustí Charles, and the dramaturge, Marc Rosich, is the result of a commission by the Darmstadt Staatstheater, programmed for their 2010/2011 season. In this same theatre *La Cuzzoni, esperpent d'una veu*, a chamber opera about an 18<sup>th</sup> Century prima donna, a commission of the Barcelona Pocket Opera Festival, was premiered in 2007 with great success. Charles, who trained in Barcelona, continued his studies in Europe and America. He has a brilliant record as a composer receiving many important prizes (amongst which is that of the Asociación de Orquestras Sinfónicas Españolas (AEOS) for *Seven Looks*, which was performed throughout Spain between 2004 and 2008) and also as a musicologist. He is a professor at the Aragon Conservatorio Superior de Música and at ESMUC, the *Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya*. His music has been performed the world over.

The libretto of Marc Rosich sets the action of the opera in Europe after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. At the same time as this event, the volcano Tambora became active in the Pacific Ocean and from it a toxic cloud of ash erupted which crossed the entire planet upsetting the natural seasonal order. The cloud reached Geneva in the summer of 1816 bringing with it alarming storms, and so trapping a curious group of exiles in their summer villas,, the group including Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, his lover Mary, her step-sister Claire Clairmont, and Doctor Polidori. The fruit of this encounter in the middle of the "summer without summer" was two of the most important texts of Gothic literature, *Frankenstein* and *The Vampire*.

The orchestra, chorus and soloists create an enveloping sound space which places the public in the middle of the opera, from the staging, which also functions as a powerful instrument to the percussion, placed in the theatre itself, along with a subtle amplification which makes it possible to enter the subconscious of the protagonists and read their obsessions. In short, this is a dramatic experience that allows us to get under the very skin of the protagonists.

## Summary and libretto

The impoverished Lord Byron, fleeing from his legal disputes with his wife, had come to Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva in search of fresh air and inspiration. There he found himself in the irksome company of his new physician, Doctor Polidori, a pusillanimous young man with literary pretensions who was mesmerized by him. The visionary poet Percy B. Shelley and his discreet mistress and future wife, Mary, were also staying on the lake shore. With them was Claire Clairmont, Mary's frivolous step-sister, who was studying singing and had suggested the trip to Geneva because she was secretly pregnant by Byron. The fervent Byron and the idealistic Shelley had read each other's works and had long wished to meet. Their instant empathy aroused the repressed anger of Polidori, who felt humiliated and marginalized. And meanwhile Byron's devastating charisma swept all before it.

The group entertained themselves by reading ghost stories by the fireside till well into the night. To wile away the long hours of boredom, Lord Byron suggested a literary contest in which each of them was to write a tale of terror inspired by the gloomy atmosphere. The contest produced two of the prime works of Gothic fiction. Mary wrote the opening pages of her *Frankenstein* in a secret gesture of revenge over Shelley's absences and fits of mystic exaltation, while Polidori wrote a story entitled *The Vampyre*, a parody of an unfinished tale by Byron. His tale sparked a whole series of works about refined, seductive vampires, which was to culminate in Stoker's *Dracula*. Paradoxically, when *The Vampyre* was published, it was attributed to Byron.

## Volcanos

Writing these words I find myself in Copenhagen. It is the middle of April and a few days ago the Eyjafjalla volcano in Iceland has started to erupt. And despite its unpronounceable name the volcano is the main topic of conversation in the city. The cloud of ash blown out from one of its vents is spreading over the north of Europe and the streets of Copenhagen are full of tourists caught by surprise and trapped in the city by the closure of all air traffic routes. Unlike most of these people, I am not just passing through Copenhagen. I am here working on the dramaturgy of a new project with Calixto Bieto, a commission from the Betty Nansen Teatret, which is just a few minutes away from the centre of the city. The rehearsals began a few weeks ago but there is still a month and a half before the premiere of the piece at the Bergen Festival. This weekend Calixto had been planning on getting back to Barcelona to see the family, but the volcano put a stop to that. The same thing has happened to Rebecca, the set designer, and to Ingo, the costume designer. They both had bought plane tickets for a getaway to their homes in Germany. At the table next to us in the French restaurant where we four are having dinner together is an international representative of the Belgian brewery Chemay. Over a plate of seafood he is being philosophical about the unexpected supplement to his holiday and tells us that his counterpart in the Spanish market is also in the same boat. We have a few drinks with him shortly after at the next-door bar, and he passes on the rumour that there have been some businessmen who have paid thousands of coronas to get a taxi to take them from Copenhagen to Berlin or Paris. Listening to the tales of this chap, now in English, now in French, I can't help but think of the Tambora, the volcano in Indonesia that in 1815 started erupting with such force that a year later Europe and America were left without a summer. That other cloud of dust caught unawares another group of tourists, English ones, on the shores of Lake Léman, at the foot of Mont Blanc. The extraordinary summer storms forced the group – composed of Lord Byron, his doctor, Dr. John Polidori, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley and her step-sister Claire Clairmont – to remain indoors in the Villa Diodati and from this confinement, with the electrifying atmosphere of those nights and the incessant rain against the window panes, was born two of the leading works of romantic gothic literature, *Frankenstein* and *The Vampyre*.

I knew of these events a long time ago. I must confess that sometime in my youth there was to be found around the house a recording of Gonzalo Suárez's great film, *Rowing with the Wind*, whose images ended up being a rather blurred through being put on the video player too often. All the residue of sensations that the film had left in me came to the surface again one day, now more than two years ago, when Agustí Charles and I were looking for a theme for our second project of collaboration in opera. That day I came across a book in a local bookshop, a collection of short stories that tried to reproduce the fruits of a gathering on one of those stormy nights around the fireplace in Villa Diodati. This was the night that Lord Byron challenged his guests to write short stories inspired by the tales of terror collected in the book *Fantasmagoriana*, which he had been reading from night after night until the very last page. As they found themselves without that nightly diversion Byron challenged his guests to write themselves the material that was to keep them amused in the isolation, which seemed it would never end, from the rest of the world.

It was clear that the anecdote from Villa Diodati was highly charged material for the creation of our new opera and so came into existence the seminal idea of *LByron, un estiu sense estiu*. From the outset, we were provided with a group of literary figures, who, as well as being of interest for their own vast work, offered us a complex interweaving of

relationships of affection and disaffection. We began with the unquestionably magnetic figure of Lord Byron, conscious himself of his own genius, but at the same time having a morbid complex about his congenital lameness. Next to him we had Doctor Polidori, drawn in an unhealthy manner to the light given off by the poet even while he was the butt of all of Byron's jokes, frustrated by his own limitations as a writer and jealous of Byron's new friendship with the fellow poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. The latter, for his part, was living intoxicated by the world of abstractions in his mind, the universe of sensations born from his imagination and that bound him intimately to nature, distancing him therefore from reality, and by extension, from Mary. She, for her part, was suffering from this alienation from her lover while at the same time trying to make her own voice as a writer heard in a world where the only act of creation allowed to a woman was childbirth. And finally, there was the voluble Claire Clairmont, in love with Byron and secretly expecting a child by him, a person who faced life from the principle of pragmatism. This network of relationships, with so many nuances, became the foundation on which we have built the opera with the intention in the libretto to tackle the themes not so much from a cerebral point of view as from the organic one demanded by the characters and their dramatic situations. Our work has also consciously aimed at a certain theatricality - but not of an old-fashioned type - with a certain intention of countering those experiments of a badly understood modernity which pay no attention to the dramatization that every opera needs.

The discovery of the determining role that the eruption of Tambora played in the destinies of our characters was a key moment in the construction of the piece, both from the dramatic as well as from the musical point of view. So we wanted to imagine that the opera began with the eruption of the volcano on the other side of the planet, in the Pacific, and that its echoes reached a Europe torn apart by Napoleon, with the sound of the eruption thundering over the battlefield of Waterloo (where, according to documents, Byron and Polidori halted). And finally, its roar, in the form of a tempest, cornered and confined our personages to the four walls of the Villa Diodati. Moreover we wanted the domino effect of this eruption to culminate in the writing of the stories, as if this surge influenced and inflamed their imaginations in a decisive manner. So for us, the orchestra and the chorus have ended up forming an organic whole that comes to life with the eruption of the volcano, and that starting with this initial surge, spreads like a living thing throughout the piece, an animate bolster against which we hear the recitative passages of the soloists. The ensemble of the orchestra and chorus is a natural force that in transformation, at one moment is the murmur of the forest, at another the roar of the tempest, at yet another the voice of the dead, and then is the mirror of the words that come from the mouths of the living ... as if all the musicians formed part of the same living organism, one in continual transformation.

Listening now to the anecdotes of the Belgian beer rep (stories that I would never have heard if it hadn't been for the interruption in our lives of the Icelandic volcano) I can't help but smile. Who would have said to us, to Agustí and me, that echoes of Tambora would have had such resonance for us such a short time before the premiere of our new opera?

**Marc Rosich**  
**Libretista**

## Towards a new model of opera: *LByron*, a Summer without Summer

To write an opera today is probably the most fascinating challenge that can face a composer. And it is not just for what the magnitude of such a project represents – something which without doubt should not be underestimated – but for the responsibility one faces in one of the genres where there is a magnificent repertoire and because reaching a level of excellence similar to that of some past composers seems an extremely difficult thing to do. The creative models of contemporary composers have changed singularly in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century, not to mention in comparison to that of composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The challenges faced by Mozart, Verdi, Puccini, Wagner or Strauss, to cite only some of the most outstanding composers, are different from those composers face today, not to mention the challenge of contemporary opera to today's opera-goers, who, like those of the past, continue to want to discover a production which interests, entertains, and above all, seduces them. I am speaking as another member of the public here, of course, as I don't think that I am so different just because I am also a composer: in the end I am also just another opera lover.

Before writing *LByron*, I had already written a chamber opera, *La Cuzzoni*, also with a libretto by Marc Rosich. Here I took my first steps in the genre and learnt something that has been fundamental in my way of conceiving a musical drama: opera, like no other genre needs and demands communication with the listener, the person who needs so much to be surprised and seduced. Pleasing the listener is really nothing more than the sum of these two things. That is why it is not something that worries me when I come to do my work: I know that as another member of the listening public, what seduces me could also seduce others. The intellectual project surrounding the work of conceiving and finally bringing an opera into existence is something totally personal, equivalent to what an architect has to do with the plans and the workers have to do in the construction of a building. This is part of the job, of my work as a composer. I am not so concerned that the listener should know how I do this, but rather should appreciate what is finally produced. I prefer that the listeners are carried away by the acoustic images that the subconscious generates, that they discover the work step by step and that, in the end, they connect with it. The indescribable element that all musical works have in the end is something that can't be controlled, because it depends on many variables: the type of public, their readiness to participate and let themselves be carried away, the suitability of the work to its time, etc. There are a great many elements that, although one might try to measure them, are in the end uncontrollable: while we all agree that *Tristan and Isolde* is a work of art we can't argue this with concrete and irrefutable words. I try to seduce the public with sounds that describe the protagonists and their stories. The listeners must decide if I achieve this or not. This is the risk, my risk, one I accept without fear so that what I am about to explain is nothing more than an attempt to make myself understood in as way that is probably impossible: by explaining the world of sound with words.

*LByron*, *un estiu sense estiu/un verano sin verano*, develops from two essential parameters that at the same time are in the synthesis of the storyline in the text: the real and the unreal. The real is made up of the worldly concerns of the protagonists, the joys and misfortunes of a fascinating and marvelous encounter, which for them turns into something cruel and uncontrollable. The unreal is part of an idea that stems from their real situation, and like much in life, leads them finally to the limits of the existential, where the unreal overtakes the real.

At the beginning of the opera we find ourselves in a place some of our protagonists are passing through: the battlefield of Waterloo, whose desolation and stillness reaches into one's depths. It is a place where death lives hidden below the surface like a ghostly punishment for the obstinacy of man. Throughout the opera death is represented by a male voice, the voice of soldiers fallen in the field of battle, which is at the same time the cry that surges up from the earth's interior, its roar. When Polidoro writes his first letter sitting in the midst of the battlefield, what emanates from his pen is the death that despite the time that has passed since the battle, lives on in the field around him. Death – the male chorus – and life – the female chorus – make up the reality of the man, both are his tenacity. The explosion of the volcano Tambora, around the time that our protagonists visit Lake Séchèron in Geneva, seems to be an omen of a not very promising denouement, a premonition.

In the opera then, there exists the objective of situating the listeners in the scene so that they feel the sounds in their own skin the sounds and recognize their sensations these produce. Using a language almost of cinema, sound and image transport the listeners to the centre of a kaleidoscope of sound in which the essence of the story is perceived as an eventual individual reality. To achieve this, the entire scene acts as an enormous instrument where the acoustic dimension traps listeners and takes them to the places where the drama will be played out. Sound and movement seem to be one single thing, and both try to bring listeners to a drama, almost reminiscent of a Wagnerian one, where all the elements taking part, chorus, orchestra, as well as the musicians that are on stage and the set in which the sounds of nature are echoing, serve to back up the soloists, who little by little present a story where the real and the unreal seem indivisible. From the sarcasm of Byron to the existentially weak Polidoro, the childish Clair, the discreet but impressive Mary, the imaginative but impetuous Shelley and the conspiratorial servant Fletcher, each person is his or her voice. The words and the sounds that come from the voice of each one of them is a reflection of how they think and how they act, so that the music shows us, apart from what they seem to be like, what they really are: something that one way or another it is impossible to describe with words and gestures, but which the abstraction of music allows us to recognize in a subliminal manner.

The opera begins then with the wailing of the dead in the field of battle, which, as I have mentioned earlier, is represented by the male voices in the chorus, who from beyond the grave ask to be allowed to speak. The female voices represent the very opposite- rest, the impossible ideal- so that it is not until well advanced in the opera that both groups, male and female, come together. The grand chorus of voices will be the connection between the real and the unreal, the tangible and the intangible, represented in music by the two extremes that are in essence the sound by itself and the word. The chorus tries to construct in the course of the opera an impossible language, while in its continuous attempt to do this, ends up by underlining the dialogues of the soloists adding a dramatic/musical game that places the soloists in the centre of each scene. These, in contrast to the chorus, appear to us to be diaphanous, with a transparent and tremendously real language, portraying each character with a musical expression that underlines their character and allows us to glimpse the intangible: their virtues and weaknesses.

The description of each moment moves away, then, from the mere musical representation of the romantic melodrama, distancing itself from the idea of the "leitmotiv" to come nearer to a microscopic and hyperrealist description of each scene and its content. There is no room for superficiality in a story in which the personages describe themselves, baring their innermost selves, transformed only by those who accompany them. The exterior of each changes depending on who is observing, from what each one believes he or she

really is, to how each one believes he/she is seen in the eyes of the observer. In this way the superimposition of the two realities in the penultimate scene of the second act reflects at the same time who each one is and who each one would become – or perhaps has already become: the disturbed and fevered self-description. This is a moment in which the music gives way to the cacophonous noise of an impossible reality, where finally the genius of its creators leads to a tense reality, full of contradictions, and in the end to a disturbing simplicity.

I wish, however, to stress the importance that nature and its relationship with man has in this opera, as it is nature that one way or another transforms the protagonists, and which provokes in each one the dream of who they think they are. In this way, the representation of the eruption of the Tambora volcano, the Great Storm which opens the second act and the imposing presentation of the Mont Blanc, are three moments in the opera by means of which the orchestra and the chorus come to us as extraordinary columns of sound that stretch out to the infinite, where a sea of sounds finally builds up to a fabric of sound of great dimensions which dissolves and reappears constantly forming a fabric of sound which almost seems to swirl around the listeners and accompany them from one scene to another. The counterpoint to this flowing sound is found in the scenes where LByron and Mary Shelley – the former with Turkish songs in Act I and the latter with the game of draughts in Act II – respectively give shape to fast-paced fragments where what life and death is and what it represents for each of them are woven in stories and discussions. These ideas little by little make up part of the drama that gradually takes us to the very heart of the opera: the storytelling challenge LByron issues.

The music written here is a musical narration that, together with the text, amount to an attempt to reach the listener by an unexplored path, or at least that is how I see it as a composer. There is a use of tone/pitch and sounds in this work that shows us something that can't be seen with a conventional gaze and more than recount a drama, goes into an abstract description of minute detail with an almost infinite reality: a hyper-reality. Perhaps to attempt this is impossible, a utopia. But isn't the emotion that music produces in us already in itself perhaps a utopia? Isn't this something unpredictable and intangible? Listen, watch and then decide.

**Agustí Charles**

**Translation: Louise Higham**

## New ways to vocalize: LByron, An attempt to renew models

To talk of vocalization in opera is perhaps to talk of the great names in the history of music, of those who were able to meet the standards of a model that today is considered an inevitable reference point of what we consider traditional opera. So, starting from the fact that there are a huge number of models that tradition has converted into standard ones, it seems difficult to achieve a new mode of vocal articulation that is at least a little convincing and, above all, one which is comparable to the use of traditional models up to the present time, which embrace practically all western languages.

At the same time, we cannot hide the fact that with reference to Catalan– and consequently Castilian – this problem has not been solved as effectively as it has in opera in Italian, German and French and in opera in English-speaking countries. I am referring to the ability to make the use of these languages in opera sound as natural as in everyday use. Still today we feel uncomfortable when we hear an opera in Catalan or Castilian, because it could be said that generally speaking, we don't identify with how these singer/actors express themselves on stage.

While the Italian or German opera-going public doesn't need subtitles because, one way or another, the diction is clearly understandable (Italian opera-goers express themselves in the same way as the actors in *their* operas), this is not the case here for work in Catalan or Castilian. This is not a new problem: at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century opera written by Spanish composers was translated into Italian because this was the only way to make it acceptable to the public. Much has been written about this matter, although the majority concludes that it has to do with questions of style, of the existing model of vocalization. I agree with this – up to a point. While it is partly true, it leaves to one side something that to me seems crucial, and that is the fact that each language possesses its own song, as in a way speaking is in itself a mode of singing, and composers from the Catalan and Castilian cultural milieus don't seem to have found the key to communicating as effectively as their Italian counterparts. Singing projecting the voice is no more than an extension – let us say an exaggeration – of the use of a language, with its characteristics, to speak. So while in Italian the expressive and exaggerated rising and falling of the different pitches of voice are inherent in the pronunciation, it is not so to the same degree in German. So the use of that language in German opera did not prevail until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, for similar reasons to those put forward in the case of Catalan and Castilian.

But how did the German language finally come to be accepted to the point that opera using this language grew and developed? As easy and unsuitable explanation – because it is not true, although too widely believed – is that there have been composers of such genius in this genre using German and that consequently this model has prevailed. The reality is, however, quite different as such a process only comes about when the modulation of the vocal use adapts itself to the diction of the German language and it is here that German opera-goers feel comfortable and connect with what is happening on the stage. This produces an expressive proximity which allows them to get to the centre of the story being performed, to the point where they can share in it. This last stage, the identification of the listener with the work is, from my point of view, a fundamental one, as without this deep relationship between music/text and listener, failure is assured. It is by chance that each language has ended up developing for the most part a type of opera which is suitable to its vocalization: Italian music has tended towards the comic while German has to epic and dramatic stories. Today, both have gone beyond this situation,

while starting out from the initial character and articulation, time has molded them in such a way that both forms have become acceptable in either of the languages. Still, one can say that in general they retain the models related to their expressive profile.

So we can conclude provisionally that each language possesses its own unprecedented diction, which in itself is a great resource as, after all, it stems from a process of refinement that has gone on over centuries of experience and small advances. In this way, when we listen to a Richard Wagner opera, without even understand a word, we can't help but take pleasure in the expressiveness of the timbre of the language, without realizing that this is fundamentally because the design of the writing for the voice corresponds closely to this timbre. It is natural, beautiful and not vocally transferable: the music would not work equally in Italian or Catalan, as the diction would not correspond to the expressiveness that comes with the pronunciation of the original language, and it would therefore be strange to the ear and less easily understood.

Having said this it is clear that the issues of vocal diction together with the nature of the sound of a language, are ones which must be faced when the vocal elements must be resolved in an opera in any language. As I see it, still today the problem of opera in Catalan or Castilian is when the voice is projected it becomes practically incomprehensible. It is not just chance that in the genre of Zarzuela there is a combination of the two vocal models of song and spoken text, as this was the only form clearly acceptable to the public of the period. From Spanish opera of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to contemporary work the problem does not seem to have been solved and all attempts at anew opera in Catalan or in Castilian have tried to follow a type of vocalization similar to or flirting with the Italian and German models. The result could not but be a lack of naturalness in the vocalization and a diction far from the natural pronunciation of the text, both of which one way or another make it difficult for the listener to identify with the drama and its outcome.

In *LByron*, as was also the case in the previous opera, *La Cuzzoni*, there is an attempt to use the voice in a manner fully adapted to the spoken language. In this attempt the text of Marc Rosich has helped enormously as his prose is very expressive rich in images, something not very frequent in present day opera. This objective has been approached from different parameters: firstly, through analyzing the modes of pronunciation of the text, in this case one in Catalan; secondly, relating the vocal elements to the phonetics of the language –especially the different positions of the voice in the oral cavity– and so by breaking up the language, to achieve a naturalness in its use. To do this it has been necessary to avoid prejudices, as the use of a the natural diction of Catalan without exaggeration " a la italiana" goes against most of the models of opera written in Catalan or Castilian up to the present time.

A painstaking study of the language seemed absolutely necessary to tackle a new type of diction, one trying to approach the spoken language. To start with, Catalan – and in many aspects Castilian as well – has two principal characteristics: an interval related to the triton, together with a movement of the words in joint degrees, and the constant use of rhythmic acceleration and slowing of the text. The combination of these elements makes possible the dramatic tension or distension of a phrase. At the same time this is not a constant element in Catalan: there is always a variable rhythm. These are not the only features, although they are, without doubt, the most characteristic ones, so that the correct use of them can lead to the desired expressiveness.

Having gone this far, I feel that I should warn the reader that what I have outlined above should not be interpreted as claiming that this is the only possible model, as in contemporary opera there is an amalgam of an great number of models, some with vocal procedures which, rather than make the text intelligible, are trying to achieve the very

opposite effect. But what I am concerned with in this discussion is the type that leads to a comprehensible vocal diction, both in content and expression, which is, in any case, what this composer is trying to achieve.

The model that originates from the phonetics is useful here to coordinate the distinct levels of the text – its fine tuning – and its purposes, with its pronunciation: from the internal to the external vowels, understood as in the oral cavity. Consonants are no more than combinations of the position of the tongue and the degree of opening of the oral cavity, which lead to the creation of the typical interferences of the language. That's to say, while vowels are common elements in all languages, each language has a range of its own consonants, and one way or another, these modulate the vowels. Each language has developed this way over the centuries. This practice gives each word the possibility of becoming an instrument, as sound is modulated in a manner similar to that of a wind instrument: in these the sound is produced with air that comes from the respiratory tract and goes to the wind pipe while the reeds and keys modulate the projected sound in pitch and tone. Something similar occurs with any voice: we all have a different oral cavity, and it is with this that we pronounce the language. In *LByron* it is the chorus that follows this model-. They become a VOX INSTRUMENTALIS that leads and unites the orchestra and the voices of the soloists. The chorus in this way is both instrument and also bearer of the text of the soloists, in an amalgam of resources that surrounds the stage and converts its tone into a single sound process in which sometimes it can even be difficult to distinguish this from the orchestra and vice versa. The pronunciation comes from the decomposition of the main text of the opera, thus constructing an impossible meta-language, where the vain attempt to understand its meaning emphasizes and amplifies the dialogues of the soloists and gives greater impact to the drama. This produces an impressive choral tone, with a richness of timbre, where the chorus becomes an essential instrument which, together with the orchestra, supports the vocal and dramatic play of the soloists' voices.

There can be no doubt that, like all language in permanent evolution and change, its timbre and the musical use that comes from this offer us infinite resolutions, and while not all of them are effective and comprehensible to the same degree, yet they do allow us to develop musical procedures that evolve in parallel to it. The work and the objective of the composer is to find the paths that allow listeners to journey through the sound images of their own means of expression. We have signaled some paths, those which we consider ideal for our intentions in opera, although, needless to say, they are not the only ones that could be followed.

**Agustí Charles**

## Agustí Charles, composer

Born in Manresa, Agustí Charles began his music studies at an early age. His first works in composition date from the 80s, under the guidance of his first composition teachers: Miquel Roger, Albert Sardà and Josep Soler. Later he studied with Franco Donatoni, Luigi Nono and Samuel Adler, as well as working with other composers and conductors including Joan Guinjoan, Cristóbal Halffter, J.R. Encinar and Ros Marbà.

He has had much recognition for his work, receiving nearly fifty awards, among these are the most important national and international composition prizes. He has also received commissions from important institutions and prestigious performers, as a result of which his music is performed worldwide. His work "Seven looks" was awarded the prize of the Association of Spanish Symphonic Orchestras (AEOS) and has been played by all the major Spanish orchestras between the 2004 and 2008 seasons. His first opera *"La Cuzzoni, esperpent d'una veu"*, was premiered in October 2007 at the Darmstadt Staatstheater in Germany with great success. Recently, in 2008, the Italian Stradivarius Records Co. has published a new monographic CD with part of his orchestral work, played by the Orchestra of the Community of Madrid and directed by José Ramón Encinar. The Tritó Records Company edited a new monographic CD in 2010 with the Symphonic Orchestra of Barcelona and National of Catalunya, directed by Jaime Martín. In March 2011 the premiere of his second opera, *"Lord Byron, un estiu sense estiu"*, will take place in the Staatstheater of Darmstadt, Germany. The libretto is by Marc Rosich with stage direction by Alfonso Romero.

He is also author of texts and books related to musical composition and analysis, among which stand out the following: "Análisis de la música española del siglo XX (2002)", "Dodecafonismo y serialismo en España" (2005), "Instrumentación y orquestación clásica y contemporánea" (2005).

At the present time he teaches composition, occupying the chair in composition at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Aragón, and is also composition teacher at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya.

**Marc Rosich,**  
writer of librettos

(Barcelona, 1973)

Rosich is a graduate both in Journalism, and Translation and Interpretation, (Arabic and English). He is also a playwright, director, occasional actor and literary translator.

He was a member founder of the production company *Teatre Obligatori*. His basic formation in dramatic writing was received in seminars in the *Obrador de la Sala Beckett* in Barcelona, where at the present time he gives beginners classes in dramaturgy. Among the most recent pieces of his own work are *Carwash (tren de rentat)* (Staatstheater Stuttgart/FACYL Salamanca/ Teatre Romea, dir. Annette Pullen), *Rive Gauche* (Sala Muntaner, Cia. Q-Ars Teatre, dir. Rafel Duran) i *Vittoria* (Club Capitol, dir. Antonio Calvo). With the director Andrés Lima, he has just completed the translation and dramaturgy for *Falstaff*, based on Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (CDN). As a frequent collaborator with the director Calixto Bieito, he is co-responsible with him for the dramaturgy of the production *Voices, a modern passion* (Betty Nansen Teatret, Copenhagen) and of Friedrich Schiller's *Don Carlos* de (Cia. Romea / CDN / Mannheim Schillertage), as well as of the adaptations of the novels *Tirant lo Blanc* by Joanot Martorell (Teatre Romea / Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin / Schauspielhaus Frankfurt / Teatro Albéniz, with music by Carles Santos, (Critics Prize 2008 in Barcelona for the dramaturgy) and also Michel Houellebecq's *Plataforma* (Edinburgh Festival / Teatro Bellas Artes / Teatre Romea). For the Barcelona Teatro Nacional de Catalunya he has carried out the dramatic adaptations of the novels *Pedra de tartera* by Maria Barbal and together with Rafel Duran, *Mort de dama*, by Llorenç Villalonga (2010 Stage Prize for the best adaptation). He has also done the dramaturgy for Homer's *L'Odissea* for Lluís Soler based on the translation by Carles Riba (Temporària Alta, Girona / Théâtre de l'Archipel, Perpinyà / Festival Grec, dir. Antonio Calvo).

As a writer of librettos he has collaborated with the composer Agustí Charles on the two-act opera *L'Byron, un estiu sense estiu* (Gran Teatre del Liceu / Staatstheater Darmstadt / Teatros del Canal, 2011) and also the chamber opera *La Cuzzoni, esperpent d'una veu* (Staatstheater Darmstadt / L'Auditori de Barcelona / Teatro Albéniz, 2008). At the present time he is preparing the one-act piece *Suite de Java*, with Agustí Charles, and also the opera *Los cuentos de la Alhambra* with composer Enric Palomar, based on the work by Washington Irving.

In the field of stage direction for dramatic productions and classical music he is responsible for a considerable number of projects, mostly in collaboration with the musical director Elisenda Carrasco. As a result he has taken part in the most recent editions of the *Festival d'Òpera de Butxaca i Noves Creacions*, responsible for the dramaturgy and directing of the lyric works *Alma* (2007, based on the life of Alma Mahler), *Últimes cançons*, (2006, from Mahler lieder), *Don Giovanni* (2005, an adaption of the work of Mozart for the puppeteer Pepe Ota) and *Il geloso Schernito* by Pergolesi (2003, together with Albert Tola).

As dramaturge, he has had the following works premiered *N&N, nuria i nacho* (Sala Beckett, 2008, dir. Antonio Calvo), *Enfermo imaginario*, (Teatro Condal, 2008, written with Pau Miró, dir. Antonio Calvo), *Party Line* (Sala Beckett, 2007, dir. Andrea Segura), *Duty Free*, (Teatre Talia, València, 2007, dir. Antonio Calvo) for the Jàcara Teatro (Alacant), *De Manolo a Escobar*, (nacional tour, dir. Xavier Albertí). *Surabaya* (Teatre Romea, 2005, dir. Sílvia Munt, a work which received the finalist prize for the Premi Fundació Romea 2004) *Copi i Ocaña, al purgatori* (Tantarantana, 2004, dir. Julio Álvarez) and *Unhappy Meals* (Teatre Malic, 2002, directed by the author himself).



## Publisher

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Dietrich Grosse, founder and director of Mondigromax, became director, along with Toni Rumbau, of the Festival of Pocket Opera and New Creations (Festival d'Òpera de Butxaca i Noves Creacions - FOBNC) in 2004. The quality of the productions generated for the festival, their extension (with co-productions on an international scale as well as collaborations with other institutions in the city of Barcelona) along with the perceived need to support these productions further after the initial festival performances, led to Mondigromax setting in motion an editorial department so as to guarantee the continuity of the most outstanding works. Mondigromax is the publishing house for the operas of Agustí Charles, Joan Albert Amargós, the compositions of Enric Palomar and the librettists Marc Rosich and Rebecca Simpson.

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Dietrich Grosse

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