



Below: Walter Benjamin's commentary on Paul Klee's monoprnt Angelus Novus gives insights into the character of Monteverdi's Clorinda

Noa Naamat has directed a vast array of repertoire worldwide including *Phaedra* (Royal Opera House), *Benvenuto Cellini* (Royal Opera of Versailles, Berliner Festspiele and Royal Albert Hall) and *Don Pasquale*, *L'elisir d'amore* and *Don Giovanni* (Arezzo Opera Festival). Upcoming projects include a new production of Otto Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for Staatsoperette Dresden in 2021.

Don Giovanni Mozart

ZERLINA

Don Giovanni's women are usually portrayed as his conquests or victims. However, instead of looking at what he took from them, I wish to focus on what they gained from him. When a woman meets Giovanni something in her awakens, she discovers new aspects of her identity and femininity. As in the Garden of Eden, the women are after the forbidden fruit and Giovanni is merely the serpent.

Zerlina starts the opera as a naive peasant girl, but then Giovanni arrives and we see her transformation from a girl accepting her preordained destiny to marry Masetto to a woman who dares to question her ultimate desires. First, she becomes a manipulative seductress when seeking Masetto's forgiveness in 'Batti, batti'. She teases him saying, 'I know what I did was wrong. Now, we can spend all night fighting or skip to the make-up sex.' Then, in 'Vedrai carino', Zerlina develops into the mature woman telling her husband, 'I am here for you for better or for worse, not because it's expected of me, but because I want to.' It's one of the most intimate moments in the opera.

Giovanni's lack of emotional development prevents him from being the opera's true protagonist. By contrast, the women he meets undergo significant psychological journeys. So it's time to present them in a fresh way instead of their original depictions

as neurotic, obsessive or coquettish women. Their ability to question and challenge their predetermined reality, makes them true paragons of Giovanni's mantra, 'Viva la libertà!' ON

