

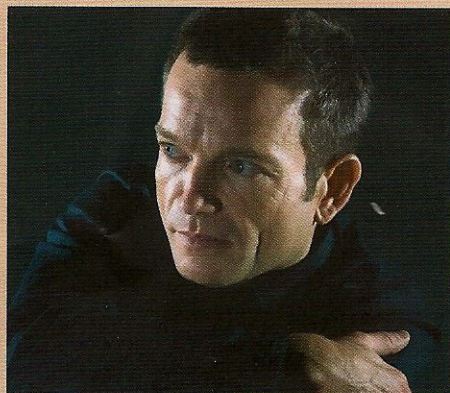
My Life – a week with: Christophe Rousset

Thursday 24 June In a break from rehearsals at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (TCE), I make a quick visit to London for interviews including BBC Radio 3's highly detailed *CD Review*. Pop into the National Gallery to see Spanish paintings and Vermeer, followed by tea and scones in true British style.

Fri 25 This is the final week of rehearsals in the lead-up to David McVicar's revival of *Semele* at the TCE. Following the Paris run, we will bring the cast and my orchestra to London for a concert at the Barbican on 8 July. It is Les Talens Lyriques' second production of *Semele* this season, following Zhang Huan's Chinese-inspired production in Brussels at La Monnaie. Today was the first orchestral rehearsal with the singers but no staging and a miracle happens – the orchestra is already sounding great!

Sat 26 Stage and orchestra rehearsals. Here comes the challenge bringing the disparate parts together and coaxing the chorus to sing to my beats. It's been a wonderful experience working with David McVicar because the relationship has been so fluid and easy-going – no battles! I like his work because he gives so much space for the music. Danielle de Niese is singing the lead role. Separate sessions with her to settle the tempi in her aria. She's always moving around, dancing, running, dazzling – so we've had to adjust the tempo to allow her to take a breath. We are staying faithful to the score with only one cut. Running time is four hours!

Tues 29 Preparations for the next project – Lully's *Bellerophon*, one of Louis XIV's favourites. We are doing the first performance in modern times at the Beaune Festival on 24 July and then we will give a special, rare concert in Versailles at the Opéra Royal on 17 December. I have the original hand-written



manuscript dating back to the premiere in 1679, and a second edition from 1701, which I found in an antiquarian bookshop. I meet the chorusmaster to settle the tempi and we have corrected the printed score by cross-referencing the original. Next, an invitation to dinner at a private house to mark Dominique Meyer's imminent departure from the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées to the Wiener Staatsoper. He will be sorely missed in Paris. Natalie Dessay sings for him. Kissin plays. Dominique very touched by this special tribute.

Wed 30 Opening night of *Semele*. Packed house at the TCE – buzz and excitement. This is Dominique's final opera after more than a decade at this jewel of a theatre. Les Talens Lyriques have worked with Dominique on more than eight opera productions and he has supported us in some more obscure repertoire – our favourite! – reviving forgotten operas such as Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. Many of these productions have travelled across La Manche to the Barbican. I hope he was pleased with our performance this evening. Next stop London!

CHRISTOPHE ROUSSET IS THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF LES TALENS LYRIQUES

INSIDE TRACK – DO YOU KNOW THE BUSINESS?

All the answers can be found in the previous edition of *Gig*:

- 1 According to a poll on BBC Radio 3, what is the 'nation's favourite aria'?
 - A 'Dove sono' (*The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart)
 - B 'Ruhe sanft, mein holdes Leben' (*Zaide*, Mozart)
 - C 'When I Am Laid in Earth'

- 4 A district of Seoul, South Korea, is to be the home of a theme park dedicated to which composer?

- A Ludwig van Beethoven
- B Antonio Vivaldi
- C Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

- 5 Who claimed to be the only 'leading media