

LA FORZA DEL BARITONE

Interview ERNESTO PETTI



(Ernesto Petti)

OM: Ernesto, since October 2018 you have been performing successfully at the Theater Basel in „Lucia di Lammermoor“ where you and your colleagues got many positive comments by the audience as well as by the media.

EP: Singing in Basel was a great experience, the city is very beautiful and in the moments free from work I really enjoyed going around discovering its beauty. The work environment was very stimulating.

OM: How did you experience your work in Basel and what was your personal highlight of your work period in Basel?

EP: I was lucky in this production to work alongside great artists. This package has led to a climate of relaxation that allows us to give the best of us. One of the most beautiful moments was certainly when the public decided to give us a standing ovation, which is not very common in the theater.



Rosa Feola and Ernesto Petti in LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR/Theater Basel/ Foto @Sandra Then

OM: How did you get to become an opera singer and who at the beginning encouraged you to go this way?

EP: Initially opera music did not interest me at all. I was completely dedicated to sports, in fact, already young (13) I played in a water polo team Serie A2. Around the age of 17 I

approached opera music thanks to discs on the possession of my father, who is a big fan of this genre. Love was immediate and from there I decided, thanks to the total family support to take this path.

OM: Who are the singer colleagues whom you admire most and whom you consider as being your personal ideals?

EP: Surely the singers that I appreciate the most are those with whom I fell in love with the opera. One of my favorite baritones is Cornell McNeil, while my favorite singer ever was Franco Corelli who is also my father's favorite.

Ultimately, if I had to chose my ideal singer it would be Franco Corelli.

OM: To young singers nowadays it often happens that they get confronted with offers to sing very demanding parts. Also parts for which perhaps the time has not yet come for the singer to take too high challenges. What are your experiences?

EP: During my career (started 10 years ago), I was fortunate enough to do a lot of small roles. I think it's very useful for a young person to gain experience without exposing to much.

OM: You are still young but sing already big parts and you are a singer who on stage is present with full energy. For example with 29 years you did Giorgio Germont in „La Traviata“. This is a part which mostly older singers like especially because oft the father figure. How do you approach such challenges?

EP: I have faced the role of Giorgio trying to identify myself as much as possible in the score. The character is not absolutely compatible with my person, but our job is to make it become so. Vocally I find it a role that can highlight all the qualities of a baritone. Mezzavoce, legato, acute and serious notes... I think it is good for the technique.

OM: The contemporary staging directors request from the singers much playfulness and action. Are there for you limits which you wouldn't be prepared to pass?

EP: It is true nodadays directors ask a lot oft the singer. In the past, it was much more focused only of singing while today you have to be real actors. Fortunately I had a preparation that allows me to be comfortable with this. I had experiences of directors who asked me to be bare-chested on the stage, this does not create me any problem, but I do not think it would be the same in the case of a full nude.

OM: For someone like you who was born in Salerno / Italy of course you are predestinated for parts in Verdi, Puccini and in Donizetti operas. Beside being an Italian and your mother tongue is Italian, of course you are „at home“ with the works of Italian composers. But how comfortable do you feel in parts by French or German composers?

EP: With roles in French and German, I must say that I never had problems, only required a major study to fully understand what the character says and to have an optimal pronunciation.

OM: How would you describe your study years? What were your first experiences on stage in front of an audience with high expectations?

EP: I can say that my studio has almost always been with pianists. I have also attended several highlevel academies, including the Puccini Academy of Torre del Lago and the course of Placido Domingo in Valencia, Spain. My operatic debut that I remember very well was on 2009 and was live on national radio. Thanks too the support of all the colleagues it was a good experience.

OM: You are someone who intensively does sports which is quite noticeable from your strong body. Your strong physical appearance is certainly an asset for big parts on stage. Is doing sport for you the ideal way for balancing your very demanding work on stage?

EP: My life started with sport, and I think this is very useful for singing, but I do not think I can verify the opposite because I can not imagine myself without practicing it. I started swimming at the age of three, continuing with water polo. Nowadays I do crossfit and apnea. It's a great exercise for the breath.

OM: Your next engagements will be as Carlo Gerard in „Andrea Chenier“ in Ravenna in March and as Silvio in „Pagliacci“ in Genova. Both parts demand also a lot of acting. How easy or difficult is acting for you on stage?

EP: Yes I will interpret Carlo Gerard in Ravenna and Silvio in Genova. I feel the acting something quite natural in me, but as I said before: I attended the course of improvement of Placido Domingo where the artistic director at the time was Davide Livermore, this helped me a lot too overcome some limits that I still had.

OM: In April you will perform 2 concerts which will offer an opportunity to hear you for the first time in Germany. In Munich on 14 April and in Hamburg on 18 April. These concerts will be moderated by Holger Wemhoff. How did this cooperation come about?

EP: The cooperation with Holger was quite casual, he discovered me on YouTube and from there was born a „friendship“. Later talking about his work we thought how to combine the two things and we decided to organize these two concerts. We often listen to talk about music, mutual advice and every day repeats to be my biggest fan, and I must say that it is just like that, but I am his biggest fan too, he is a wonderful person and friend and I am so happy to share this experience with him, there will be future projects for shure.

OM: You will be accompanied by the pianist Otello Visconti. You know each other since the beginning of your carreer. How did this encounter come to?

EP: Otello is a great pianist who lived not far from my hometown, he was my first pianist and with him I always had a relationship of trust. He was known as a great professional and so I was advised to go to him to learn the scores.

OM: These concerts show a cross section of your repertoire. Such solo evenings are a challenge which demand intensive rehearsing before. How do your prepare yourself for these concerts and what in particular is important for you?

EP: These concerts were decided with Holger and I chose the program with him. The preparation will be with my pianist who in this case will also be the concert pianist. The most important thing will surely be having fun making music and giving joy tot he public.

OM: Which are the parts which you plan for the near future and which are the parts which you would love most to do?

EP: In the near future I'am preparing the role of Carlo Gerard in Andrea Chenier, Silvio in Pagliacci, Foscari, Ezio in Attila and Marcello in Bohème. I must say that I am already playing the roles I love. If I had to choose some other role I would really like: Michele in Il Tabarro from Puccini.



Ernesto Petti and Holger Wemhoff / Foto @ cPAMPLONAc / Jacob Tillmann

Ernesto Petti and Holger Wemhoff with the Programm SOLO MOMENTE , Live in Munich, 14.04.2019 Herkulessaal and 18.04.2019 Laeishalle in Hamburg.

Tickets for Munich [LINK](#)

*Ticket-Hotline for both Concerts: **01806 700 733***

*** Interview by Marco Stücklin for opernmagazin.de**