

**Pressekontakt**

Filmbüro, Valerio Bonadei, Seefeldstrasse 229, 8008 Zürich,  
[valerio@filmbuero.ch](mailto:valerio@filmbuero.ch), 079 653 65 03



**Blenkov & Schønnemann present**

# JUAN

**A film by Kasper Holten**

**Based on Mozart's Don Giovanni**



**A visually breathtaking drama; a story of passion, sex, guilt and destruction.  
Take the journey into the hidden depths of the 21st century Man**

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Title: Juan

Director: Kasper Holten

Screenplay: Kasper Holten & Mogens Rukov, based on Mozart's "Don Giovanni"

English translation: Christopher Maltman & Henrik Engelbrecht after Lorenzo da Ponte

Music: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Conductor: Lars Ulrik Mortensen

Orchestra: Concerto Copenhagen

Production Company: Blenkov & Schønnemann with Eurofilm and Zentropa

Producers: Malene Blenkov & Michel Schønnemann

Sales Company: Trust Nordisk

Cast:

Juan:	Christopher Maltman-	United Kingdom
Leporello:	Mikhail Petrenko	- Russia
Donna Anna:	Maria Bengtsson	- Sweden
Elvira:	Elizabeth Futral	- USA
Zerlina:	Katija Dragojevic	- Sweden
Police Chief:	Eric Halfvarson	- USA
Ottavio:	Peter Lodahl	- Denmark
Masetto:	Ludvig Lindström	- Sweden

Principal Photography: July 15th. 2009

Shooting Location: Budapest, Hungary.

Budget: 29 mill. DKK / 4 mill Euro

Duration: 105 minutes

Shooting Format: 16mm

Language: Contemporary English

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## **Pitch**

Juan is a famous artist and notorious playboy, thanks to his ability to become just what any woman dreams of. He turns his own life into a megalomaniac work of art, playing the game of seduction like no other, driven by a manic restlessness that pushes him forward through an endless stream of conquests, betrayals, sex and eventually murder, with death lurking as the only possible outcome.

A portrayal of male sexuality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, taken to the extreme, “Juan” portrays how the blessing of an endless appetite for life and a will to conquer the world, might in reality turn out to be the path to ruthless destruction and eventually self-destruction.

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## Synopsis

The film takes place in our time in a modern metropolis, somewhere in Europe. We follow Juan – a celebrated visual artist and an infamous womanizer - and his assistant, Leporello, through twenty-four compact hours, during which everything goes wrong, and Juan's fall from the pinnacle is inevitable.

Watching a staging of *Don Giovanni*, Juan notices the beautiful upper class girl Anna in the audience. After the opera, he seduces her behind the back of both her fiancé and her father, a powerful police commander. But they are caught in the act by her father, who thinks Anna is being raped. Trying to escape, Juan accidentally kills Anna's father. Desperate to maintain her innocence, Anna tells the police a story of Juan breaking into the house, raping her, and murdering her father in cold blood. Within minutes, a manhunt has begun.

Juan takes flight through the city together with Leporello, and as the movie develops, we feel how the police slowly close in on them. Juan repeatedly meets a hooded tramp, who seems to be following him – maybe he has witnessed the murder? Their flight is only interrupted whenever Juan's overwhelming desire forces him to seduce new women. He meets Elvira, a former - now heartbroken – mistress, who has come to town searching for him, but Juan crudely runs away from her.

Juan and Leporello join an engagement party at a downtown bar. Juan soon sneaks away with the bride-to-be, Zerlina, and takes her to his studio, where he seduces her by offering her a life of luxury and glamour. But Zerlina, who has ruined her own life for Juan, finds out he is lying to her. Her groom Masetto furiously starts a hunt for Juan. When Juan holds a party in his studio, he ends up being exposed by both jealous lovers, disillusioned mistresses as well as the police. In a desperate attempt to escape from their pursuers, Leporello and Juan set fire to the studio.

Their flight brings them back to the scene of the murder of the commander, where Juan deliriously hears the voice of the man he killed. We sense the pursuers drawing nearer by the minute. Juan is disintegrating. They steal a car and start racing through the city, flashing police cars everywhere around them.

They rush across the river, where Elvira has drowned herself just hours earlier, realizing that she loves Juan, but also that he will never change. In his delirium, Juan thinks she is with him in the car, bidding him farewell. In the next second, Juan finds himself back in his burnt out studio, where he is finally approached by the tramp. To Juan's great terror, he sees that the tramp is in fact himself. Suddenly we are back in the stolen car. It smashes against a concrete wall, and Juan is killed. We follow a new day dawning over the metropolis. Rain is pouring down.

## A Stunning Visual Experience

*"It is easy to imagine, that, if Mozart were alive today,  
he would be enjoying himself, making movies in Hollywood"*  
– Kasper Holten

It is a great challenge to turn an opera into a movie, no question about that. It has been tried before, with mixed success. The results tend to be either too naturalistic, thereby exposing the *artificial* element in the universe of the opera, or it has turned into filmed theatre, which does not use the specific filmic means of expression. From the very beginning six years ago, Kasper Holten wanted to virtually rip the opera out of its *genteel* atmosphere, and throw it out into the **chaotic, brutal modern reality**, creating an unpolished film, as brutally real as life itself.

And just this has indeed been done. In the case of both script, image and sound, solutions have been sought out to release energy, presence and personality so that the film has not become polished and careful, but instead as restless, direct, deep and extremely present as the main character it portrays. It makes use of the full visual vocabulary of **modern cinema**, following such unorthodox inspirational sources as *The Bourne Trilogy* and *Traffic*.

All the way from the first version of the script, the aim has been clear: To permit opera's **extreme physical expressions** of the biggest feelings to burn right through the screen, but at the same time exploring the modern cinematic language in order to get up close, even **underneath the skin of the characters**. Thus, every scene and every single detail has been adapted so that it fully exploits the film media's great power to create emotional presence, while at the same time maintaining the exceptional *live* experience of opera, since the actors really sing on set.

The result of all this is indeed a truly unique version of Mozart's beloved opera – and not one for purists! Holten's feature debut *Juan* is an intense, vibrant and energetic take on a **timeless drama**, a movie that drags the audience into a world where feelings are sung, and where the visual and auditive expressions merge and leave the spectator breathless.



## Holten on Juan

Our version of the tale is first and foremost a portrait of the 21st century man, taken to the extreme. A portrait of the force within ourselves that drive us forward in the restless search for new achievements and conquests, the force which makes us build palaces, become opera directors, make films or fly to the moon. But it is also the force that make us become narcissistic, only loyal to our instincts, to go to war, and which can turn into destruction and eventually self-destruction if not controlled.

The film does not try to reveal what lies at the core of this incentive – it is not interesting to see Juan in psycho-therapy getting everything clearly and clinically pointed out, but through his disintegration we get important clues as to what drives him, which is entirely relevant for us as a modern audience. For what is driving us ourselves – and do we also permit our demons to devour our lives?

Our Juan is a human being that feeds on the dreams of others, whether it be through art, or through the women whose dreams he steals. He is an intellectual artist, and he is aware of his own disintegration and sees his fall approaching inevitably, but without the possibility to save himself. He is a strong, seductive and empathetic person, who, through his impressive skill to get inside other people's feelings, becomes extremely manipulative, when he again and again transforms himself into everything a certain person dreams of – but thereby emptying himself more and more. We witness how a celebrated quality such as empathy is also at the root of manipulation.

He is paced forward by the restlessness of the modern man: Each conquest does not bring relief, but only increases the thirst and the unrest. He is addicted. In his deconstruction, Juan becomes a symbol of just how closely connected is the force that makes us create and conquer, with the force that drives us into self-destruction. In fact, these are not two forces, but two aspects of the same force.

As a modern man, Juan is trying desperately to create meaning in his life. He turns his own life into a megalomaniac work of art, and in the end this projects becomes so important for him that he has to stay loyal to it, although it leads to his death. Otherwise, his life would have been meaningless, and nothing can be more threatening to modern man.

Also, we discover a motive of vengeance in the Juan figure. He bears a suppressed trauma, most possibly connected with experience early in his life – a trauma that drives him to revenge himself on the women he meets, by transforming himself, almost chameleon-like, into their innermost dreams, only to leave them subsequently. But each revenge leads only to further detachment from his own self, instead of approaching the core of the trauma – until it the moment it has grown big enough to devour him, like he used to devour women: Today, revenge does not come from God as in Mozart's original, but from within ourselves.

Still, there is no doubt that even though we may not exactly sympathize with him, our main fascination in this film is about Juan. We ourselves are seduced by him and follow his desperate yet still evidently sexy battle with himself and his women. Neither hero nor villain, he is a tragic figure, yet entirely human.

## Production Story

The story of Kasper Holten's feature debut *Juan* starts six years back, when producers Malene Blenkov and Michel Schønnemann visited The Royal Danish Opera to see Kasper Holten's staging of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which has been highly praised around the world (and is now available in DVD-version from Decca). Blown away by this exceptionally visual experience, Blenkov and Schønnemann saw a great potential in the 30-year-old Holten, who had by then already staged more than 40 operas, and had been the artistic director of The Royal Danish Opera for four years. They both agreed that this visually gifted stage director should be given the opportunity to explore his talent on the big screen, and immediately took contact to Holten. He was intrigued with the idea of combining his primary artistic métier with the film media for which he holds a life-long passion, and said yes – on one single condition: That the project should be nothing like any other opera film of the past, but indeed a powerful cinematic experience, set in a modern environment. A central idea was right from the beginning that the singers should sing live on location, to bring out the physicality of singing and acting both in voices and pictures.

Six years of hard work later, Holten's *Juan* is a reality – a film based on one of the world's most celebrated operas, *Don Giovanni* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The choice of this particular opera was never really a hard one to make, as Kasper Holten explains: "We had several different operas in consideration, based on both the artistic potential of the work itself, as well as previous adaptations of operas, which helped us decipher what works and what doesn't when it comes to opera movies. And in the end we were completely absorbed by the sombre psychology of *Don Giovanni*. Quite quickly after going through the opera, I realized that – yes, this is the film I want to make, because the story itself still holds such a great relevance to 21st century human beings". But even if the story was thematically more adaptable than other classical operas, a great effort was still to be made in order to re-narrate the story in a modern setting, and - most importantly - to turn an opera into a movie.

### Interpreting the Tale

Holten's *Juan* is primarily based on Lorenzo Da Ponte's libretto (i.e. the opera equivalent to a script) for Mozart's opera from 1787. Da Ponte's story is a transcription of the mythological story about the seducer *Don Giovanni/ Don Juan*, a narrative well known in various forms in our cultural history. Molière's 1665 play is perhaps the second-most famous recounting of the tale following the opera, but it all started with Tirso de Molina's play *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*, published in Spain around 1630, introducing to the world the notorious libertine *Don Juan*. As mythological material, the tale has been the object of many artistic and intellectual interpretations, by the likes of Lord Byron, Søren Kierkegaard and Albert Camus.

In its original form it was a story about a rebel against God, a rebel who must be punished to obtain moral serenity, and the sexual element was rather subordinate and merely an expedient to rebel. During other periods of time the actual seduction has, however, been of greater interest.

Together with Mogens Rukov, Denmark's most acclaimed scriptwriter, Holten began the deconstruction of Lorenzo Da Ponte's story, in order to rebuild it as a modern cinematic script. "We worked hard to narrow everything down and cut away, until we were sure that we had found the essence of the Don Giovanni fable - a story about a man who disintegrates, driven by an inner demonic power, a thirst for revenge, and restlessness. Then we started the next important process of creating a cinematic narrative based on Da Ponte's scenes and characters. And one of the first decisions was to let the entire film take place within twenty-four hours, the final twenty-four hours of Juan's life, in order to create an intense dramatic effect, and fully exploit the presence of the film media, where you obviously don't waste time on changing scenes." says Holten.

"One of the most central processes was to cut down the length of the opera, in a way that we would never do on the stage. It was heartbreaking to leave out some very good music, but we wanted to concentrate our story on Juan, thus leaving out big parts, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Act. Opera-purists will not like this, I fear, but Mozart's music will survive, and I think we really respect Mozart by trying to re-interpret his masterpiece. He was modern in his time, and he would want us to treat him quite freely, I hope" Holten explains.

Another important decision during this process concerned The Stone Guest, who has always been a central figure in the tale, symbolizing the punishing God. Holten and Rukov, however, made a completely different take on The Stone Guest. Holten explains: "The religious element is omitted in our movie. The Stone Guest has been turned into a tramp, and does no longer represent a punishment from God restoring a moral balance, but a state of mind. The tramp represents the essence of Juan's moral fibre, his human potential. In our modern time, we don't have an external God driving us and telling right from wrong, we are driven by forces within ourselves, which make us create and conquer, but they are also forces that can end up swallowing and ultimately destroy us. This, to a modern audience, is a much more interesting point to make than that of a feudalistic, omnipotent God".

During the process of writing the script, Mozart's three-hour opera was edited according to the new scenes written by Holten and Rukov, and ended up in a 105 minutes version. This introduced a completely different way of approaching a script that even one as experienced as Rukov had never tried before: "When you write a script, you strive towards reaching a certain number of pages, like 90. Then you more or less know that the film should be about one-and-a-half hour long – but you can never be certain. Here, once we had the treatment ready, and the music had been edited, we knew exactly how long the film would be. That was a very strange sensation".

## **From Stage to Screen**

During the preproduction phase, several processes were unfolded simultaneously. Perhaps most importantly, the orchestra music was recorded during two compressed



weeks in the Copenhagen Opera House, by the singers and Concerto Copenhagen, one of the very best baroque orchestras in the world today. But the recordings were nothing like normal classical recordings, because Holten and his musical crew had agreed at an early stage that the singing in the film should be recorded live on set. “In almost all previous opera films and musicals, the music is dubbed, and this inevitably creates an artificial, polished feel. We wanted to create an extreme realism and a notion of presence, because that is exactly what the film media does best, and opera is all about being live! So we decided to let the physical movements of the actors, like running, tripping and fighting, affect the voices heard in the film,” says Holten.

The wish to record the voices on set, however, forced the musical crew into slightly unorthodox methods, as the two key elements in opera – the orchestra and the singers – must play together, in order for the conductor to find the right pacing, pitch and volume. “But this was simply not possible, as we needed to split up the singing and the music, because the singing in the final film should be the sound recorded the set. Therefore, we had to install the singers in a separate room, with a direct visual connection to the conductor, so they – via an LCD screen - could follow the pace of the orchestra,” tells the conductor Lars Ulrik Mortensen. This method enabled the technicians to split up the orchestral and vocal sound, and for the location shoot, the singers have been equipped with small, invisible earphones playing the orchestral music, enabling them to “sing along” with the prerecorded music. Additionally, a so-called “click-track” was added to the music, giving the singers a small pacing signal, which is what they normally receive via the conductor waving his baton.

But before the music could even be recorded, another central process had to be finished: Translating Da Ponte’s original Italian libretto into English. Following naturally along with the other artistic and adaptational choices made by Holten and his team, the libretto uses a very contemporary, straightforward language. “However, we wanted to be very aware of class differences in the characters, as in the original, and find the right style of language for each character. And all the while, we wanted to stay true also to Mozart’s music, which consists of both rough and much more sensible passages.” says Holten. The translation was made by Christopher Maltman, together with Danish dramaturg Henrik Engelbrecht. Maltman’s native English speaking skills were greatly beneficial, providing the authentic touches to the libretto, while Engelbrecht was in charge of the structural part of the translation. Also, it was decided to use as a strength the different accents of singers from UK, USA, Russia, Sweden and Denmark instead of hiding it: In a modern metropolis, English is spoken (and sung) in many different ways.

Another important pre-production task has been to make camera rehearsals with the characters. Holten explains: “All opera singers have had a lot of acting training. But there’s a huge difference between acting to an audience in the stalls 50 metres away, and a to camera ten centimetres from your nose. We simply had to tune everything down, and work on a microscopic level – but without losing the intensity of thought and emotion. And even though it’s a big challenge for them to act in front of the camera, all singers have done extremely well at the scenic rehearsals”.

Last, but not least, production designer Steffen Aarving spent most of the preproduction in Budapest, finding and preparing the locations for the shoot. “Budapest has turned out

to be a true gift for the production, providing everything from a fantastic opera house, via great classic railway stations, to the run-down factory area by the river, which serves as a perfect location for Juan's studio," says Aarfing, and Holten adds, "This film has done some travelling, from the initial dream of shooting the film throughout the capitals of Europe – London, Madrid, Berlin, Moscow – to shooting everything in Germany. In the end we made the perfect choice to go to Budapest, because of the great variety of fantastic locations, as well as the very skilled technical and artistic people in their film industry".

Now, with the shooting well under way in the Hungarian capital, all we can do is wait with excitement to see Holten's *Juan* on the big screen in 2010.

## The Director

## Kasper Holten

Born 1973.

Artistic director of the Royal Danish Theatre since 2000. With his 6 Reumert prizes, he is the single most winning artist in the history of Denmark's most prestigious theatre prize.

Holten has staged more than 50 operas, musicals and plays in Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Latvia, France, Austria, Russia and USA, and between 2003 and 2006, he staged the first comprehensive production in almost a century of Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" at the Royal Danish Theatre. Even though he is still in the spring of his career, Holten has established himself as one of the great stage directors of our time.



No matter whether the staging is "Le Nozze di Figaro" in Moscow, or Carl Nielsen's "Ivanhoe" in the royal deer park in Copenhagen, critics and opera lovers alike have agreed: Kasper Holten is a highly original artist, a formidable interpreter of material, and a man with a talent for creating stunning visual experiences.

At the age of 9, Holten had his first encounter with opera, going to see "Carmen" with his parents. And it was love at first sight for young Holten, who immediately persuaded his parents to let him go to the opera alone, twice a week, to see the shows. At age 11 he made his very first opera staging in the parents' living room: Wagner's 4-hour marathon opera "Die Valkyrie", made with dolls and an old grammophone. Simultaneously, he started his own opera magazine, written, designed and published by himself.

But even though opera may be the love of Holten's life, he has had another life-long, passionate affair: Cinema. And it is exactly these two great muses that he now wants to introduce to each other, in a highly intense, modern film, where the biggest feelings are sung out loud.

## THE CAST

Due to *Juan* being at the same time both a movie and an opera, assembling the cast proved to be more challenging than most opera or film productions. To start with, the ambition to make an artistically and technical perfect opera limit the possibilities to little more than a handful of the planet's best opera singers. On top of that comes the fact that these world-class singers also had to be very photogenic, and impress as actors in front of a camera. These two factors combined made the casting extremely difficult.

To do the job, the project needed help from the very best, and the very best is indeed Eva Wagner-Pasquier. She is quite simply one of the most competent people within the opera world – a grandchild of Richard Wagner, and the current co-artistical leader of *Bayreuther Festspiele*, one of the biggest events in the operatic world.

In close collaboration with Kasper Holten, Eva Wagner-Pasquier assembled a cast, which is virtually a list of superstars to be. All incredibly talented and acclaimed opera singers, but also skilled actors, having gone through extensive camera tests as a central part of the casting. This group of relatively young, yet established singers come from UK, Russia, USA, Sweden and Denmark,; they work and live all over the world, several of them currently with major parts in the most important opera houses of the world.

## Christopher Maltman (Juan - barytone)

Born 1970, UK.

Perhaps the jewel of the cast, and absolutely vital to the entire production, Christopher Maltman was committed to this project from an early stage.

Already being an internationally acclaimed singer, Maltman last year made a highly praised debut at the Salzburg Festival in the leading role of Don Giovanni. This marked a preliminary peak of Maltman's career, as there is no greater honour than to sing Mozart in his town of birth. The staging of *Don Giovanni* became a phenomenal success, as the second part of controversial director Claus Guth's Mozart Trilogy, which has shaken the opera world, and will be staged in its entirety in 2011.

The reviewers praised Maltman for his "presence and permanent gleam", his "authenticism" and "dramatic brilliance". Thus, for an adaptation to the screen of "Don Giovanni", you will find no singer with the same level of presence and sense of dramatic expression as Christopher Maltman.

Press reviews of "Don Giovanni"

*It is hard to imagine any other pair of singers getting near the dramatic brilliance displayed here by Christopher Maltman and Erwin Schrott, the Giovanni and Leporello, as they struck sparks off each other.*

Richard Fairman, Opera Magazine, October 2008

*Christopher Maltman schleppte sich angesichts seiner physischen Abnutzungserscheinungen durch die erotischen Eskapaden – ein von Lebensgier gebeutelter Verführer, schauspielerisch perfekt durchgeformt, stimmlich geschmeidig mit schöner Piano-Kultur. Dieser Zyniker charakterisierte den negativen Helden trefflich.*

Egon Bezold, Klassik.com, 31 July 2008

*Christopher Maltman's dramatic achievement as the dying hero is breathtaking, a performance at least as remarkable for its athleticism as for its intelligent lyricism.*

Shirley Anthonp, Bloomberg, 29 July 2008  
Andrew Clark, Financial Times, 28 July 2008

Furthermore, Maltman is a regular guest at several of the world's most prestigious opera houses: Wiener Staatsoper, The Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, Deutsche Staatsoper, the English National Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, New York, to name a few. Maltman has sung a wide variety of leading parts in classical operas, including Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Ramiro (*L'heure espagnole*), Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*), Tarquinius (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Marcello (*La bohème*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*).



## Mikhail Petrenko (Leporello - bass)

Born 1975, Russia.

Petrenko – a protégé of world-famous conductor Valerij Gergiev - is emerging at the forefront of the new generation of great singers from the famous Russian Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, and is currently creating quite a stir in Europe and America.



In 2009, Petrenko toured the biggest venues with Mariinsky, singing Hagen in Wagner's "Götterdämmerung". Some reviewers have labeled Petrenko "the best Hagen ever", as Mariinsky went from one sold-out stage to another, visiting Great Britain (Covent Garden), Italy (La Scala), Spain (Teatro Real), France (Théâtre du Châtelet), Japan (Santory Hall), Germany (Baden-Baden Festival), Austria (Salzburg Festival) and Australia (Melbourne Festival), among many other places.

At the 2008 Salzburg Festival, Petrenko managed to have simultaneous parts in both "Roméo et Juliette" and "Othello", and earlier the same year, he was engaged at the Paris Opera, singing Verdi's "Don Carlos", Bellini's "I Capuleti e i Montecchi" and Rossini's "Il Barbiere dei Siviglia".

## Elizabeth Futral (Elvira – soprano)

Born 1963. USA.

Being one of the more experienced forces of the *Juan* cast, Elizabeth Futral has already established herself as one of the major sopranos in the world today.

With her stunning vocalism and vast dramatic range, she has embraced a diverse repertoire that includes Vivaldi, Händel, Mozart, Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi, Glass, and Previn. Of her spectacular debut at the Metropolitan Opera in "Lucia di Lammermoor", The New York Times wrote: "Her singing was sure, virtuoso and yet still lighted by humanity"



Futral has performed at the most prestigious opera houses around the globe, including Washington National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin, Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera, Teatro Municipal in Santiago, and Bayerische Staatsoper.

Furthermore, Futral is very much sought-after soprano for musical recordings, starring in more than a dozen different opera CDs in Europe and USA.

## **Maria Bengtsson (Anna – soprano)**

Born 1975. Sweden.

From 2002 to 2007, Maria Bengtsson was engaged by Komische Oper in Berlin. There, she became well acquainted with Mozart, singing the parts of Pamina (Die Zauberflöte), Konstanze (Entführung aus dem Serail), Fiordiligi (Cosi fan Tutte) and Zerlina (Don Giovanni). In a review of "Die Zauberflöte", Bloomberg's Shirley Apthorp praised Bengtsson's "radiant", "gorgeous" and "glowing" Pamina.



Alongside her membership of the ensemble in Berlin she was a guest at the Staatstheater in Wiesbaden, at the Badische Staatstheater, at the Semperoper Dresden and at the International Music Festival in Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. In concert and recital Maria Bengtsson performed at the Charintian Summer, at the Festival in Berlin, at the Konzerthaus Vienna, at the Vienna Musikverein, at the Klangbogen Festival, at the Gulbenkian Foundation, at the Teatro Nacional Sao Carlo in Lisbon and at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt.

## **Eric Halfvarson (The Commander – Bass)**

Born 1951. USA.

Any opera lover having visited some of the big opera houses, will undoubtedly recognize the name Eric Halfvarson, as he is indeed one of the absolute superstars of modern opera. The Illinois born bass sings regularly with the world's most prestigious opera companies and symphony orchestras, and his impressive career dates back to the late seventies. He is renowned for his amazing vocal force, stage presence, and superior technical ability, which have let him to sing all the most demanding parts in the entire classic opera repertoire.

Not surprisingly, with his formidable dark bass voice, the role of The Commander is very familiar to him. In 2008, he sung that part at The ROH Covent Garden. Also in 2008, he performed at the Wiener Staatsoper (Hagen in "Götterdämmerung") and twice at the Los Angeles Opera House.

Parallel to his stage career, Halfvarson has performed on little more than a dozen CD recordings, and is featured in several DVD releases, e.g. Deutsche Grammophon's live recording of "Götterdämmerung", where reviewers labeled Halfvarson's performance "enormously menacing", and himself as a "great singing actor" being the "structural pillar of the show".

QuickTime and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

## **Katija Dragojevic** **(Zerlina – mezzo soprano)**

Born 1970. Sweden.

In the 2003/2004 season she appeared as Kate Pinkerton in Puccini's "Madame Butterfly" at the ROH Covent Garden and the Shepherd in Wagner's "Tannhäuser" at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.



She has appeared as Zerlina in "Don Giovanni", and Dorabella in "Così fan tutte" at the Scottish Opera, as Annio in "La Clemenza di Tito" at the Welsh National Opera, and as Carmen with the English Touring Opera. During the autumn of 2004 Katija Dragojevic returned to the Covent Garden as Siebel in "Faust". Since then she has appeared as the Page in Strauss' "Salome", and as Meg Page in "Falstaff" at the Royal Opera in Stockholm.

Immediately after finishing shooting on *Juan* in Budapest, Dragojevic traveled to Salzburg to sing the role of Cherubine in "Le Nozze di Figaro" at *Salzburger Festspiele*, in Claus Guth's ground-breaking production.

## **Peter Lodahl** **(Ottavio – tenor)**

Born 1974. Denmark.

Lodahl is by no means a stranger to the role of Ottavio in "Don Giovanni" – he has performed the part with numerous ensembles, including the Kiel Opera, the Norwegian National Opera, and Staatsoper Hamburg.



Peter Lodahl is a much sought-after concert soloist and he regularly sings with most of the major orchestras in Scandinavia. He has also sung concerts in Stuttgarter Liederhalle with the soprano Diana Damrau, as well as in Concertgebouw, Amsterdam.

In the autumn of 2006 he joined the Komische Oper Berlin. His assignments there include Rodolfo in "La Bohème", Tamino in "Die Zauberflöte", Pylades in "Iphigenie en Tauride", Almaviva in "Il Barbiere di Siviglia", Belmonte in "Die Entführung aus dem Serail", and Ferrando in "Così fan tutte". From 2009, Lodahl joins the ensemble at the Royal Danish Opera.

In August 2006 Peter Lodahl was the 1st Prize Winner of the Gösta Winbergh Award, one of Scandinavia's most prestigious singing competitions.



## **Ludvig Lindström** **(Masetto – baritone)**

Born 1982. Sweden.

The young Swede began his classical singing education at Musikhögskolan at the University of Göteborg. He then studied with Susanna Eken at the Opera Academy at The Royal Danish Opera.

Even before Ludvig Lindström graduated from the Opera Academy, he made a name for himself as an exciting up-and-coming singer with a strong personality and stage presence, through engagements in Carl Nielsen's "Maskerade", and, most notably, the role of The Commander in "Don Giovanni". In the season of 2008/2009 Lindström made his big breakthrough with the leading role of Figaro in "Le Nozze di Figaro" at The Royal Danish Opera.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

## The crew

To producers Blenkov and Schønnemann, it has from the very beginning been of utmost importance that Kasper Holten as a debutant director should be surrounded by experienced forces. As a result, the Juan crew is made of a mix of some of Denmark's and Hungary's most talented and established people – from Danish cinema's grand old man, Mogens Rukov, to young, yet already highly acclaimed artists like cinematographer András Nagy and editor Mikkel EG Nielsen.

All the main creative functions have been deeply committed to this project from an early stage, following Kasper Holten from his first directorial tests, through the process of finding a visual, narrational and auditive language for the film.

Additionally - thanks to Holten's status within the opera world - the part of the crew that has opera as their metier are collected from the very best. The conductor Lars Ulrik Mortensen, along with his orchestra Concerto Copenhagen, are rated among the top Baroque orchestras in the world today, and Eva Wagner-Pasquier, who has been in charge of the casting, is simply *the* caster of the opera world.

The following is a brief presentation of the main creative team. For full lists of the film crew's credits, please see [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)

### *Scriptwriter*

Mogens Rukov is Denmark's best script consultant. No less. He has been involved in an innumerable amount of films – and is one of the main reasons to the success Danish cinema has experienced in the last two decades, having written film such as Vinterberg's "Festen" – the highly celebrated first Dogme movie – and Christoffer Boe's "Reconstruction", winner of the *Camera D'Or* at the 2003 Cannes Festival.

### *Director of Photography*

András Nagy is perhaps the most experienced young Hungarian cinematographer, already having shot over 10 features. Among them are "The Belgrade Phantom" by Jovan Todorovic, "Balra a nap nyugszik" by András Fesös, and the celebrated "Fehér Tenyér" by Szabolcs Hajdu. For the latter two, Nagy won the Best Cinematography prize at the Hungarian Film Week, in 2000 and 2006. Also in 2006, he was declared Cinematographer of the Year at the Goldeneye Cinematographer Festival.

### *Editor*

Mikkel EG Nielsen has in spite of his age already been an established part of the Danish film industry for some years, working with Thomas Vinterberg, Anders Morgenthaler, Nikolaj Arcel and Christoffer Boe. He has won the Danish Robert prize for editing two times, with "Kongekabale", and "Reconstruction".

## Lars Ulrik Mortensen

### (Music Director)

Born 1955. Denmark.

Mortensen works as a conductor, both as one of the regular leaders of the European Union Baroque Orchestra and as the conductor of 'modern' orchestras in Denmark and Sweden. Mortensen has recorded extensively and in 2001 he was awarded the International Cannes Classic Award as best soloist in a repertoire between 1600 and 1800.



In 2007, Mortensen was awarded the "Sonning Prize", the world's most prestigious prize for classical artists. His numerous recordings have also earned him the French Diapason d'Or award, and a Danish Grammy award. At the Royal Danish Opera, Mortensen has conducted Mozart's "Idomeneo", "Le Nozze di Figaro" and "La clemenza di Tito", Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia", and Monteverdi's "Ulysses", to name of few.

Mortensen has toured extensively in Europe, USA, Mexico, South America and Japan. Between 1996 and 1999 he was professor of harpsichord and performance practice at the Hochschule für Musik i Munich.

## Steffen Aarfing

### (Production Design)

Born 1955. Denmark.

Together with Marie Í Dali, Aarfing has been the most sought-after Danish stage scenographer over the last ten years. For Kasper Holten, Aarfing and Dali has staged Mozart's "La clemenza di Tito", Verdi's "La Traviata" in Stockholm, "L'elisir d'Amore" by Donizetti in Reykjavik, "Le Grand Macabre" by Ligeti, both in Copenhagen and at the San Francisco Opera, the complete "Der Ring des Niebelungen" at Copenhagen Opera, and, both for KlangBogen Festival in Vienna: Wolfgang Rihm's "Jakob Lenz" and Giancarlo Menottis "Goya".



Aarfing also did the production design for Boredal's film "I am Dina" along with Marie Í Dali.

## Company profiles

### **Blenkov & Schønnemann**

Blenkov & Schønnemann was founded in 2003 by producers Malene Blenkov and Michel Schønnemann. They are a Copenhagen-based, independent production company, producing both feature films and tv series of high quality. They share a sincere passion for art-house movies, however both producers reckon that love for the genre isn't enough, since good films should be able to attract large audiences. They firmly believe that quality should be the core of any film production, and that audiences come with quality films.

In 2008, Blenkov & Schønnemann won both a Robert (awarded by The Danish Film Academy) for best Short ("Boys meets girl"), and a Danish Tv prize (equivalent of the Emmy) for best children's programme with "Shane's World". The third season of "Shanes World" is to be broadcasted in 2010, and the programme has turned into this decade's most most popular children's programme.

Blenkov & Schønnemann's 2005 film "Opbrud", directed by Jacob Grønlykke, won critical acclaim in Denmark, as well as two awards at Viareggio Film Festival: For the second-best overall film, and for best actress (Birthe Neumann).

Before 2003, both Michel Schønnemann and Malene Blenkov worked as producers in Denmark and abroad. In 2003, Michel Schønnemann produced Lasse Spang Olsen's comedy "Gamle mænd I nye biler", one of that year's most popular Danish films, selling more than 330.000 tickets in Denmark. He also produced the highly succesful tv series "Maj & Charlie" for Danish National TV.

Malene Blenkov started her career working for the renowned company Saatchi and Saatchi in London, producing commercials all over Europe. In 2000, she began working on feature films along with director Kristian Levring, and together they made the second of the Dogme movies, "The King is Alive" (Vinterberg's ""Festen" was the first Dogme movie"). Malene Blenkov also produced Levring's next feature, the British-Danish co-production "The Intended" from 2002. Parallell to her partnership with Levring, Malene Blenkov produced two feature documentaries for Anne Wivel, "Slottet i Italien" and "Johannes' Hjerter", which have both become highly celebrated.

After teaming up in 2003, both producers have maintained their international perspective on filmmaking, and they possess a strong will to produce quality films aimed at the European market.

## **Eurofilm Studio**

Eurofilm Studio was founded in 1992 by producers Péter Miskolczi and Gábor Váradi., and is now one of the leading production companies in Hungary, with a lot of large-scale, international co-productions. In 2005, Eurofilm Studio produced the most celebrated Hungarian films in many decades, Györgi Palfy's „Taxidermia“, which was selected in the *un certain regard* category of that year's Cannes Festival, as well as winning several prizes (the main prize for best film at Brussels International Film festival, and a Silver Hugo at the 42nd Chicago Film Festival, to name a couple).

Eurofilm Studio have won the main prize at the Hungarian Film Week on two occasions, with the same director: In 1997 for „Long Twilight“, and again in 2004 with „After the Day Before“, both directed by Attila Janisch.

Recently, Eurofilm Studio have engaged in several international co-productions, most notably „The Secret of Moonacre“ by Gábor Csupó, starring Dakota Blue Richards and Tim Curry, and „Copying Beethoven“ by Agnieszka Holland, starring Ed Harris and Diane Kruger. This summer, apart from „Juan“, Eurofilm Studio also produced Roselyne Bosch's „La Rafle“, starring Jean Reno.

## **Zentropa**

Zentropa was founded in 1992 as a result of the co-operation between director Lars von Trier and producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen on the feature film "Europa" (which bore the working title "Zentropa").

Zentropa has produced more than 70 international and Scandinavian quality features, co-productions, and low budget films. With an annual turnover that has reached 29.3 million Euro, Zentropa is the largest film production company in Scandinavia. A position it has maintained since 1994.

Films produced by Zentropa enjoy critical acclaim worldwide and have been rewarded with the most prestigious prizes the festival circuit has to offer, among these The Golden Palms and The Silver Bear. Moreover Zentropa has represented Denmark at the Academy Awards on four occasions.