

Pedro Halffter

Penelope's dream



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PRODUCCIONES LÍRICAS



**PENELOPE'S DREAM
THE OPERA**

SYNOPSIS

THE PRODUCTION

CAST

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

ADVERTISING

DIARIO LA RIOJA: Review of the Performance by Eduardo Aísa

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THE OPERA

“**Penelope’s Dream**” is an opera composed by the Spanish composer and conductor **Pedro Halffter**. It premiered at the Música en Villafranca Festival in 2023. The opera is inspired by the character of **Molly Bloom**, the female protagonist of **James Joyce’s** novel **Ulysses**.

This monologue is a stream of consciousness in which **Molly**, the wife of **Leopold Bloom**, offers us a glimpse into her inner world, a powerful voice that challenges imposed social and cultural norms.

Written for two pianos and soprano, the opera unfolds through three sung scenes and three musical interludes. **Molly** reflects on her youth in Gibraltar, her relationship with **Leopold**, her dreams, desires, and frustrations, and contemplates her own sexuality and femininity.

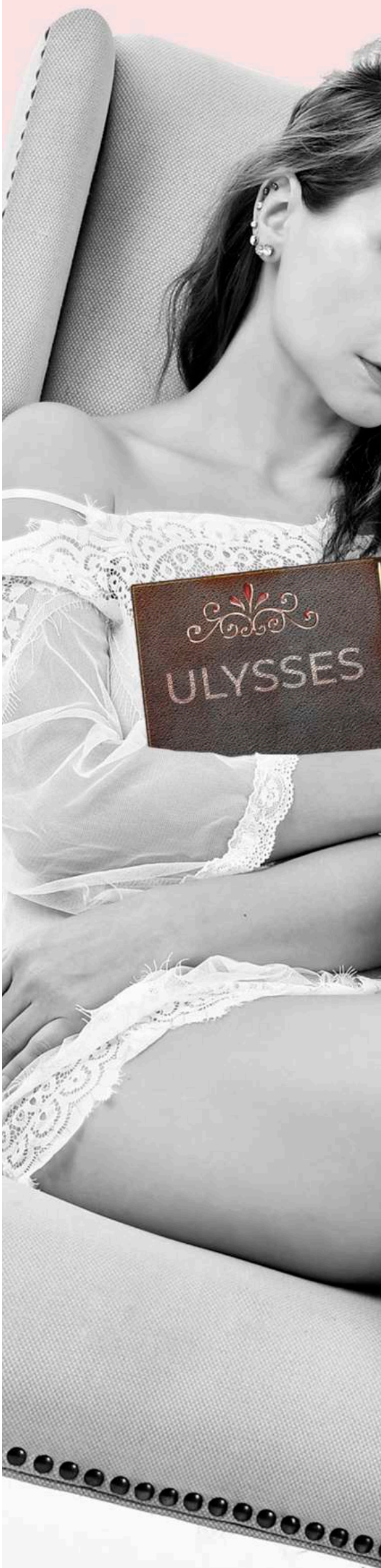
Halffter’s music creates an atmospheric and emotional environment that reflects the character’s moods and emotions. His music has been praised for its originality and its ability to capture the essence of the **Penelope** myth in a modern and relevant way. With this evocative music and its powerful narrative, “**Penelope’s Dream**” offers a unique and moving interpretation of one of the most iconic stories in classical literature.

SYNOPSIS

The action takes place between 2 and 3 in the morning. At that moment, **Molly** is resting while her husband returns home, abruptly waking her. During that brief encounter, **Molly** confirms that her husband has been unfaithful, triggering a storm of emotions in her mind. As a storm begins outside the house, with wind and uncertainty, **Molly** immerses herself in reflections on her life, what she has experienced so far, and what the future holds. She feels that time is passing quickly and that she is missing important opportunities. She recalls her old hopes and dreams of achieving fame, which have now turned into resentment towards her husband, whom she blames for her frustrations. However, the sound of bells tragically reminds her of their deceased baby, forcing her to confront the reality of her situation. Despite everything, **Molly** feels compelled to keep moving forward and fight to achieve her dreams.

THE PRODUCTION

The production presents an innovative approach that merges classic operatic set design with video projections and live broadcasts on the screen, highlighting key moments of the scene and details typically hidden from the audience. Conceived as a 3D cinematic work with elements of film noir, the use of dynamic projections generates immersive experiences for the audience. Lighting plays a crucial role in creating various atmospheres and emotional states of the protagonist. The curtains, which establish different planes onto which images are projected, contribute to creating the atmosphere of confusion experienced by the protagonist.



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CAST

Libretto and Music: Pedro Halffter based on Ulysses by James Joyce.

Musical Direction: Pedro Halffter.

Stage Direction: Antón Armendariz Díaz.

Lighting Design: Javier Hernández Pena.

Set Design: Diana Cristobal.

Molly Bloom: Ashley Bell (Soprano).

Leopold Bloom: Hector Duro (Actor).

Piano 1: Pedro Halffter.

Piano 2: Juan Carlos Garbayo.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Stage: Cyclorama / Projector with a minimum of 10,000 lumens / 2 tuned grand pianos

Personnel: 1 Lighting Technician Assistant / 1 Stagehand / The company provides one lighting technician and one video technician.

Setup and Breakdown Time:

- 7 hours for unloading, setup, and focus.
- 2 hours for breakdown and loading.

IMPORTANT: Setup and a rehearsal in the venue are required the day before.



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Pedro Halffter

Penelope's dream

Ópera basada en
Ulysses de J. Joyce



Soprano Ashley Bell
Piano 1 Pedro Halffter
Piano 2 Juan Carlos Garvayo
Dirección de escena Antón Armendariz Díaz
Dirección musical Pedro Halffter

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Pedro Halffter

Penelope's dream

Ópera basada en Ulysses de J. Joyce

Teatro Bretón
15 de Junio de 2024
20,00h

Soprano Ashley Bell
Piano 1 Pedro Halffter
Piano 2 Juan Carlos Garvayo
Dirección de escena Antón Armendariz Díaz
Dirección musical Pedro Halffter

Colabora  Logroño

DOSSIER

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Pedro Halffter

Penelope's dream

Ópera basada en
Ulysses de J. Joyce

LOGROÑO
15 de junio de 2024
20.00 h.
TEATRO BRETÓN

Soprano Ashley Bell
Piano 1 Pedro Halffter
Piano 2 Juan Carlos Garvayo
Dirección de escena Antón Armendariz Díaz
Dirección musical Pedro Halffter

REVIEW

DIARIO LA RIOJA: Review of the Performance by Eduardo Aísa

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Piano 1: Pedro Halffter.

Piano 2: Juan Carlos Garbayo.

Teatro Bretón, Saturday, June 15, 2024

AN OPERA OF OUR TIME

I told my musical contacts, encouraging them to attend this show, that it is a 21st-century opera to be heard in the 21st century, and an excellent opportunity to experience the opera being created in the world today.

“Penelope’s Dream” is a brief chamber opera with a great economy of means, in the vein of illustrious creations from the past century, such as Schönberg’s Erwartung, Poulenc’s La Voix Humaine, or Menotti’s The Medium. It possesses very contemporary characteristics: direct and incisive musical language, recitative singing (Sprechgesang), introspective characters with various states of mind confronting critical life situations, and minimalist musical formulas, with those powerful ostinato repetitions. Soprano Ashley Bell delivered a splendid performance, portraying an intense and expressive Molly Bloom both vocally and in her stage presence. She has a voice with a beautiful timbre and generous projection, featuring a solid lower register and a spectacularly present midrange, in addition to secure high notes. She navigated the opera’s moments of extreme metric difficulty flawlessly and shone in the phrases alluding to female operatic characters such as Traviata, Carmen, Butterfly, or even Salome, with their symbolism, which Halffter skillfully incorporates into this work. Ashley is a reliable asset in any opera.

The orchestral part is supported by two grand pianos placed at the center of the stage, which not only accompany the voice but also articulate the entire musical discourse with several powerful interludes: the first, with the appearance of the train on stage, is truly impactful with its infinite mechanistic ostinato, and even more remarkable is the interlude preceding the final monologue, which begins like the March of the Grail Guardians from Parsifal and evolves, always in ostinato, until it merges with Molly’s reflections that close the work. We had the luxury of Pedro Halffter and Juan Carlos Garbayo on the two keyboards, two excellent pianists who delivered a formidable synchronized performance.

To this, we can add the clear stage production by Antón Armendariz, simple yet meticulous in the details mentioned by James Joyce in his macronovel Ulysses, on which this opera is based. The quality of the projections on the back of the stage and the perfect theatrical development also deserve praise. The audience received this splendid opera with enthusiasm, with its very current and direct musical language, even though it has nothing to do with what we’ve always called opera. Today, things change drastically, as Don Hilarión from La Verbena de la Paloma might say.

CRÍTICA DE MÚSICA EDUARDO AÍSA

Una ópera de nuestros días

Les decía a mis contactos musicales, animándolos a asistir a este espectáculo, que se trata de una ópera del siglo XXI para escuchar en el siglo XXI y una excelente oportunidad para conocer la ópera que se está haciendo en el mundo en estos tiempos. Está claro que nuestro público logro del siglo XXI es muy exiguo y no asoma todavía la cabeza, y los que quedamos del siglo XX seguimos anclados en los clichés de los verdianos de público fue de la asistencia de público fue de lo tan intenso, tan bien cantado y tocado y tan bien trabajado escé-

nicamente como este. Sí, claro que también estaba el parido de España, vacaciones de San Bernabé, terrazas a rutilo y de más tentaciones, pero provoca la música contemporánea a veces con razón: también veces, tengo que repetir: «ellos se lo pierden». «Penelope’s dream» es una ópera breve de cámara, con mucha economía de medios, en la estela de ilustres creaciones de la pasada centuria, como «Erwartung» de Schönberg o «La voix humaine» de Poulenc o «La médium» de Menotti, con unas características muy actuales: lenguaje musical directo e incisivo, canto recitado (sprechgesang), personajes introspectivos con diferentes estados de ánimo enfrentados a situaciones vitales críticas y fórmulas musicales minimalistas, con esas repeticiones en «ostinato» de tanta fuerza. La soprano Ashley Bell hizo una espléndida creación, con una Molly Bloom intensa y expresiva en su canto y en su senvoltura escénica. Posee una voz de bello timbre y generosa emisión, con un sólido registro grave y un centro de seguros espectaculares, además de agudos. Tiene momentos en la ópera de extrema dificultad métrica, perfectamente alusivos a personajes operísticos femeninos como Traviata, Salomé, Butterfly o incluso Carmen, con su simbología, que tan hábilmente introduce Halffter en esta obra. Ashley es un valor seguro en cualquier ópera. La par-

PENELOPE'S DREAM (EL SUEÑO DE PENELOPE)

Ópera de cámara con texto y música de Pedro Halffter

Ashley Bell, soprano (Molly Bloom)

Héctor Duro, actor (Leopold Bloom)

Juan Carlos Garbayo, piano 2

Antón Armendariz, dirección de escena

Teatro Bretón, sábado 15 junio 2024

te orquestal está sustentada en dos pianos de cola, situados en el centro del escenario, que no se limitan a acompañar a la voz, sino que además articulan todo el discurso musical con variados interludios de mucha fuerza: el primero, con la aparición del interludio de Parsifal y va evolucionando, siempre en «ostinato», hasta fundirse con las reflexiones de Molly que cierran la obra. Tuvimos el lujo de Pedro Halffter y Juan Carlos Garbayo en los dos teclados, dos excelentes pianistas que redondearon una interpretación sincronizada y formidable. Si a esto añadimos la nitida producción escénica de Antón Armendariz, sencilla, pero minuciosa en los detalles que menciona James Joyce en su macronovela «Ulysses» —en la que se basa esta ópera— a lo que hay que añadir la calidad de las proyecciones en el fondo de escenario y el perfecto desarrollo teatral. El público recibió con entusiasmo esta espléndida ópera, con su lenguaje musical tan actual y directo, aunque no tenga nada que ver con lo que siempre hemos llamado ópera. Hoy las cosas cambian que es una barbaridad, parafraseando a don Hilarión de La Verbena de la Paloma.



PENELOPE'S DREAM

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