



## **Buffalo Soldier in Città Della Pieve A World Premiere**

It is sure to be a great historical, musical and cultural event: From July 22nd to the 24th, in the striking Umbrian town of Citta della Pieve, "Buffalo Soldier", the new lyrical opera by American Director Karen Saillant, will hold its world premiere (on July 27th, the spectacle can be seen in Rome, at the Teatro Valle). The opera tells the story of the 92nd Buffalo infantry division, the first African American division that operated side by side with the dedicated Italian fighters and Partisans, in a joint battle to liberate Italy from the fascists. A division that, literally, "divided" the USA: it may seem incredible, but the democratic army that came to fight for Europe's freedom was also a racist army: internally, America did not acknowledge its soldiers of color. Sung in Italian and English in accordance with its contemporary style, the opera draws upon renowned poems about civil rights like "Strange Fruit", spirituals like "Oh Freedom", "This Little Light of Mine", "My Lord What a Morning" and "There is a Balm in Gilead". President Clinton's speech from the 1997 Congressional Medal of Honor Ceremony, held for the African American soldiers of World War II only *52 years* after their service, is also referenced.

The opera retraces the steps of Lt. John R. Fox, Vernon Baker and their men; from their first encounter with an army that did not want them due to their African heritage, to two of their liberating battles in Sommocolonia (December 26th, 1944) and Querceta (April 4th - 5th, 1945), to their final arrival in Naples in June of 1944.

For forty years now **Karen Saillant**, a Philadelphia native and soprano par excellence, has created and produced new works of art. Since 2004, she has been the Artistic Director of International Opera Theater, rehearsing primarily in Citta della Pieve, Umbria. Often, her operas are based on lyrical adaptations of Shakespeare. In 2010, her opera was an interpretation of The Decameron. Provided with a intense energy, Karen Saillant represents one of the premiere advocates of modern opera, with the ability to transcend and develop away from the great melodramas of the 1800s. "The work", she confessed to Euronews, "is certainly not easy, but we try with all our might."

The music for Buffalo Soldier was composed by **Carlo Pedini**. The Maestro is very active in the field of arts and literature and his music has been performed in many countries. He has been awarded high prizes at various international competitions.

Concert Maestro **Gianmaria Griglio** has been the Musical Director of International Opera Theater since 2010, with The Decameron marking his Philadelphia debut. Since 2011 Maestro Griglio is appointed Artistic Director of the International Opera Competition of Citta di Saluzzo, dedicated to the great singer Magda Olivero.

Set design and costumes are under the charge of the Korean **Mi-Kyoung Lee**, Associate Professor and head of the Fiber Arts program at the University of Philadelphia. She has collaborated with International Opera Theater, developing sets and costumes, since 2005.

The Head of Lights is **Omar Ramos**.

The opera's presentation in Rome took place at the History Of Music Department of the Liberal Arts Faculty at the University La Sapienza. Present were, among others, Daniele Fiorentino, Professor of the Department of International Studies from the Political Science Faculty of Roma III University, Ernesto Nassi, Vice President Vicar of the National Italian Partisan Association, and Maria Luisa Meo, Cultural Council of the Commune of Citta della Pieve. The moderation was led by Professor Franco Piperno, Vice President of the Faculty of Philosophy, the Arts, Humanities and Oriental Studies at the University La Sapienza. Finally, the expressive Mezzo Soprano Letizia Dei and the mighty Tenor Albert Lee, gave a sample of the Buffalo soldier songs.

It is to be noted that the Buffalo Soldier Opera was inspired by the award-winning documentary "Inside Buffalo", by the Afro-Italian Director Fred Kuwornu, a biography of the lieutenant Vernon Baker, "Lasting Valor", the novel "Braided in Fire" by Solace Sheets, the "Buffalo Saga" books by James Harden Daugherty (i.e. the memories of lieutenant Colonel Louis J. Beasley), and the poems of WE B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes, as well as the personal stories of partisans of Umbria and Tuscany .

#### Italian/English Comparison

<p>Si tratta sicuramente di un grande evento musicale e storico-culturale: dal 22 al 24 luglio, nella suggestiva località umbra di Città Della Pieve verrà presentato per la prima volta Buffalo Soldier, la nuova opera lirica della cantante, regista e drammaturga americana Karen Saillant (lo spettacolo verrà riproposto a Roma il 27 Luglio al Teatro Valle). L'opera racconta la storia della 92ma Divisione Buffalo, la prima divisione afro-americana degli Stati Uniti nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale che ha operato al fianco dei partigiani e combattenti impegnati nella liberazione dell'Italia fascista. Una Divisione che nel vero senso della parola ha 'diviso' l'America: può sembrare incredibile ma l'esercito democratico che è venuto a combattere per la libertà in Europa era anche un esercito razzista: non voleva ammettere al suo interno i soldati di colore.</p> <p>Cantata contemporaneamente in Italiano ed in Inglese, l'opera attinge a ben noti poemi sui diritti civili come: Strange Fruit, spirituals come</p>	<p>It is sure to be a great historical, musical and cultural event: From July 22nd to the 24th, in the striking Umbrian town of Citta della Pieve, "Buffalo Soldier", the new lyrical opera by American Director Karen Saillant, will hold its world premiere (on July 27th, the spectacle can be seen in Rome, at the Teatro Valle). The opera tells the story of the 92nd Buffalo infantry division, the first African American division that operated side by side with the dedicated Italian fighters and Partisans, in a joint battle to liberate Italy from the fascists. A division that, literally, "divided" the USA: it may seem incredible, but the democratic army that came to fight for Europe's freedom was also a racist army: internally, America did not acknowledge its soldiers of color.</p> <p>Sung in Italian and English in accordance with its contemporary style, the opera draws upon renowned poems about civil rights like "Strange Fruit", spirituals like "Oh Freedom", "This Little Light of Mine", "My Lord What a Morning" and "There is a Balm in Gilead". President Clinton's speech from the 1997 Congressional Medal of Honor Ceremony, held for the African American soldiers of World War II only <i>52 years</i></p>
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Oh Freedom, This Little Light of Mine, My Lord What a Morning e There is a Balm in Gilead e al discorso che il Presidente Clinton fece nel 1997 durante la consegna delle medaglie d'onore del Congresso (ben 52 anni dopo i fatti). L'opera ripercorre i passi dei Luogotenenti John R. Fox e Vernon Baker e dei loro uomini, dai loro primi incontri con un esercito che non li voleva al proprio interno in quanto afro-americani, fino all'arrivo a Napoli nel luglio del 1944 e al ruolo che hanno giocato nelle battaglie di Sommocolonia (26 Dicembre 1944) e Querceta (4-5 Aprile 1945), due tra le battaglie che portarono alla Liberazione.

Sono quarant'anni che **Karen Saillant**, originaria di Philadelphia, soprano d'eccezione, crea e produce nuovi lavori artistici. Dal 2004, come Direttore Artistico dell'International Opera Theatre collabora con Città della Pieve, spesso con adattamenti lirici basati su testi di Shakespeare. Nel 2010 si è cimentata, invece, con un'originale opera tratta dal Decamerone di Boccaccio. Dotata di una forte carica umana, la Saillant rappresenta una delle più convinte sostenitrici di una lirica moderna, capace di non fermarsi al grande melodramma dell'ottocento. "Il compito", ha confessato a Euronews, "non è certamente facile ma ci proviamo con tutte le forze".

Le musiche di Buffalo Soldier sono state composte da **Carlo Pedini**. Il maestro svolge un'intensa attività nel campo delle arti figurative e letterarie e le sue musiche sono state eseguite in numerosi Paesi. Inoltre è stato premiato in diversi concorsi internazionali. Maestro concertatore e direttore d'orchestra è **Gianmaria Griglio**. Dal 2010 è direttore musicale dell'International Opera Theater, con la quale ha debuttato a Philadelphia con la prima assoluta del 'Decameron. Dal 2011 ricopre anche il posto di Direttore artistico del Concorso lirico Internazionale Città di Saluzzo dedicato alla grande cantante Magda Olivero. Scene e costumi sono della coreana **Mi-Kyoung Lee**, professore associato e capo del programma di

after their service, is also referenced.

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Fibers Arts dell'Università di Philadelphia. Dal 2005 collabora con l'International Opera Theatre allo sviluppo di costumi e scenografie. Infine, le Luci sono di **Omar Ramos**.

Alla presentazione dell'Opera a Roma, avvenuta presso il Dipartimento di Storia della Musica della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università La Sapienza di Roma, erano presenti, tra gli altri, Daniele Fiorentino, Professore del Dipartimento di Studi Internazionali della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche di Roma III, Ernesto Nassi, Vice presidente Vicario dell'Associazione Nazionale Partigiani Italiani e Marisa Luisa Meo, Assessore alla Cultura del Comune della Città della Piave. Ha moderato gli interventi il Professor Franco Piperno, Vice Preside della Facoltà di Filosofia, Lettere, Scienze Umanistiche, Studi Orientali dell'Università La Sapienza. Infine, l'espressivo mezzo soprano Letizia Dei e il possente tenore Albert Lee hanno dato un saggio dalle arie di Buffalo Soldier. Da registrare che l'Opera prende spunto dal pluripremiato documentario 'Inside Buffalo' del regista italo-africano Fred Kuwornu, dalla biografia del Luogotenente Vernon Baker, 'Lasting Valor', dal romanzo 'Braided in Fire' di Solace Sheets, da 'Buffalo Saga' di James Harden Daugherty (ossia le memorie del Luogotenente Colonel Louis J. Beasley), nonché dai poemi dei W.E. B. Du Bois e Langston Hughes e dalle storie personali di partigiani dell'Umbria e della Toscana.

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