

Corriere del Teatro

LADO ATANELI

Baritone

We met him in Berlin where he lives. He has briefly illustrated for us the highlights of his career, which is becoming more and more successful. His fame brought him to international opera houses, where he has become popular thanks not only to his voice, but also to his charisma and cleverness.

Described by the Los Angeles Times as “one of the healthiest, roundest and most mellifluous voices on the planet”, Lado Ataneli is one of the world’s most sought-after interpreters of Verdi, Puccini and verismo roles. He appeared in Italy for the first time in 1997 at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, where he interpreted Macbeth after studying it with maestro Riccardo Muti. He also sang at the Carlo Felice in Genua in Samson and Dalila (Grand Pretre de dagon) in a new production of Hugo de Ana, under the musical direction of Michel Plasson, in Trieste with Daniel Oren, and in Traviata with Marcello Viotti at the Malibran in Venice.

How he discovered singing. Lado Ataneli was born in Tblisi, Georgia and grew up in a family which loved singing. His father, a lyric dramatic tenor, dedicated himself to folk music. His sister, a lyric soprano, took singing lessons. Lado, however, is the only member of the family that made singing a profession.

What would he have done if he had not started his career as a singer. At the age of eleven he felt for the first time the desire to become an actor. His sister’s singing teacher discovered his baritone timbre and encouraged him to study singing, but Lado preferred foreign languages. After some exams he eventually decided to follow his vocation and enrolled himself at the National Conservatory of Music of Tblisi.

Teachers, competitions and prizes, debut. Two teachers have marked the beginning of his career: the tenor Gemal Lordkipanidze and the tenor prof. Nodar Andguladze, the first Georgian singer that improved his skills at La Scala in 1961. In 1989 he first appeared at the national opera house of Tblisi in the role of Renato in Un ballo in maschera. In 1991 he won first prize and the “Gran Prix” at the International Francisco Viñas Competition in Barcelona. In 1996 he won two other competitions: “I Cestelli” in Cologne and the Belvedere Competition in Vienna. In Europe he interpreted the role of Scarpia in Augsburg. He then decided to move to Germany and began his relentless career in which he finds a tremendous amount of gratification and appreciation of audiences as well as critics.

Pre-eminent conductors he has worked with. He has worked together with conductors of international fame: in 1997 he developed the role of Macbeth with the maestro Muti for his debut at La Scala in Milan. He sang in Nabucco at the Met in New York under the direction of James Levine. In Berlin he sang in Aida directed by Giuseppe Sinopoli, which also happened to be the same day his teacher died. Under the musical direction of Daniel Oren he sang Rigoletto in Paris and Scarpia in Trieste. Fabio Luisi directed him in his first role of Scarpia in Vienna and in the same role in Geneva and then in Pagliacci in Vienna and at a gala concert dedicated to the music of Verdi. James Colon directed him at his debut in Nabucco at the Bastille in Paris and in Aida at the Met in New York in October 2005. Under the musical direction of Marcello Viotti he sang in Un ballo in maschera in Bregenz and in Vienna,

in Aida in Berlin, in Traviata at the Malibran and the Met in New York. He also recorded Gioconda by Pochielli on CD for the EMI Classics with Placido Domingo and Violeta Urmana among the interpreters. He studied with Seiji Osawa the role of Jago in Otello, which will be performed in Tokyo in March. It is also worth mentioning Fanciulla del West with Thielemann at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and I Vespri siciliani with Domingo in Washington and I pagliacci in London.

Opera houses in which he has performed The milestones of his career have been performances at some of the most famous opera houses in Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Hamburg, Paris (Bastille), Geneva, Bruxelles, Helsinki, Stockholm, Venice (Teatro Malibran), Genua, Trieste, Milan, Berne, Zürich, Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles, Bilbao, San Diego, Lisbon, Barcelona, London, Washington, and Tokyo. He has also participated in the Festival d'Orange, and those in Bregenz and Weimar. He likes the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, the Bastille in Paris, the Staatsoper in Vienna and the Met. He considers the audiences of Berlin and Vienna the most enthusiastic. His diary is also filled with numerous gala concerts that are broadcast in television and radio.

Some roles from his vast repertoire in which he has interpreted. Among them are: Sharpless, Barnaba, Tonio, Alfio, Gerard, Jago, Giorgio Germont, Jack Rance, Don Carlo di Vargas, Renato, Simon Boccanegra, Amonasro, Rigoletto, Macbeth, Conte di Luna, etc. He identifies himself above all in the roles of Renato, Macbeth, Rigoletto, Simon Boccanegra and Nabucco. He admires Gerard because of his determination, his revolutionary spirit and, in the second part of the opera, his great act of generosity, his renunciation of the woman he loves, although it is too late, and the admission of his mistakes, which the artist considers very important. Lado Ataneli appreciates the role of Nabucco and he admires his strong and resolute character and also the generosity of his father, who is ready to renounce everything in order to save his daughter Fenena. He also finds very interesting the way in which Verdi has expressed musically the transition of this character from a tyrant and aggressive person to a generous father.

Recent and future engagements: Otello at the Liceu in Barcelona in February; in Tokyo with Osawa in March; Tosca in Munich; Ernani in June at the Berliner Philharmonie with the orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Don Carlos in Los Angeles, his debut in this role; Pagliacci at the Met. In 2007 he will work on a new production of Macbeth in Washington and then he will sing in Un ballo in maschera, Tosca and Nabucco in Vienna, La forza del destino, Tosca, Pagliacci in Berlin. A Recital (26 February 2007) is also scheduled at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. In 2008 he will debut in Madrid in the role of Barnaba (this role has been only recorded on a CD for the EMI). He will also sing in Andrea Chénier in San Francisco and in Rigoletto in San Diego. Lado Ataneli is a versatile artist with an impressive voice and a strong temperament. He develops the difficult roles of his wide repertoire with his wife Manana, accomplished pianist and "severe critic towards him". In his spare time, in addition to classical hobbies, he is a great watch connoisseur and drives vintage, sports and luxury cars. In 2002, Lado Ataneli was made a member of honour of the "Academy of Sciences of the Caucasian People". He also recorded La Gioconda (A. Ponchielli) with Marcello Viotti on the stage of the Münchner Rundfunkorchester with Placido Domingo and Violeta Urmana for the Emi Classics.