

Staging History for Today's Audiences: Women in Early Opera

Deda Cristina Colonna

Opera director, choreographer and member of the research team [WoVen](#), in conversation with Karina Valnumsen Hansen and Melania Bucciarelli



When: 7 February 2023 - 14:15-16:00

Where: NTNU Dragvoll, D12 (bygg 10)

Well-known opera director and choreographer Deda Cristina Colonna meets students at IMU/NTNU to offer insight into the artistic process and the challenges of staging early opera today, from the inanimate textual and musical models on paper, to a living, meaningful performance on the stage.

Deda Colonna starts from the libretto, not just as the source of words and actions to 'translate' on the stage, but as a way to access the complex universe of the characters, to understand them fully within the context of the opera as a whole and the aesthetics of the time. Understanding of character in opera is often a challenging process. Many of the men and women peopling early opera are often more than extraordinary. They are challenged with impossible choices; they suffer in silence the most profound injustice; they can be extraordinarily faithful and yet change their hearts in the blink of an eye. Men and women in early opera behave very differently from women and men today; the role models presented in many of these operas are, to say the least, very remote from our ideals today. The conventions of staging in the Baroque period made use of the human body and the theatrical space in a different way to communicate; cross-gender castings and the presence of the castrato were common practices. A castrato was indeed perfectly believable on stage both as a female character and a masculine hero, despite his mutilated body and the high register of his voice. How can a director work with such an extraordinary palette of characters and forgotten voices? How to bring them to life today in a way that is meaningful to a modern audience?

Colonna will engage with these and other questions through the concrete example of her many opera productions, from *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Ottone in Villa*, *Giustino*, *Armide*, *The Fairy Queen*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and many others.

Welcome!

<https://www.dedacristinacolonna.com/biografia/>