



Lo speziale / The pharmacist

**Dramma giocoso/opera buffa in three acts by
Franz Joseph Haydn, libretto by Carlo Goldoni.**

First performed in 1768.

Team:

Musical director: Jan Willem de Vriend

Stage Director: Eva Buchmann

Setdesign: Eva Buchmann

Executive setdesigner: Pieter Veenhof/Atelier Man met de hamer

Costumes: Jorine van Beek

Dramaturgy: Ben Hurkmans

Light design: Marc Heinz

Stage assistant/Stage manager: Ruth Becker

Lighting technician: Ramuntxo Stoete

Technician/driver: Davy den Dulk

Producer: Jeannette Elsenburg

Synopsis

Sempronio, <i>an old apothecary</i>	bass
Grilletta, <i>Sempronio's ward</i>	soprano
Mengone, <i>Sempronio's apprentice</i>	tenor
Volpino, <i>a young rich dandy</i>	mezzo-soprano (breeches role)
Orchestra	23 musicians

Like all tutors the old apothecary Sempronio has set his mind to marrying his young and attractive pupil Grilletta. But she is courted as well by two other innamorati: the poor Mergone, who only works for the apothecary to be near her, and rich and self-conscious dandy Volpino.

In accordance with the genre there is a fine lieto, a happy end. Mergone gets Grilletta. Or to put it more rightly: it is Grilletta who gets the man she wants, Mergone.

This little treasure, one of Haydn's 16 Italian opera's, is rarely performed. The first to rediscover *Lo Speciale* for our time was Gustav Mahler, as musical director, at the opera of Vienna in 1899.

Carlo Goldoni originally wrote *Lo Speciale* for two now completely forgotten composers as a *dramma giocoso* to be performed during the Venetian Carnevale in 1755.

Haydn wrote his music on a strongly abbreviated version of this original. But fortunately all the elements typical of the opera buffa were saved. The libretto has all the freshness of Goldoni, his fine drawing of the four (out of seven) remaining characters, his lively dialogues, his great and unmistakable sense of the comic. And there are the dress up parties as notaries and as Turks, and the Schadenfreude about Sempronio's manic reaction to travelling.

The music by Haydn counterpoints every part of the action; it changes time and again in rhythm, tempo and dynamics. And it is very demanding for the singers, who must be very good performers as well, to deliver the quality of this little treasure to the fullest.

Artistic Concept

In this new production by Eva Buchmann, director, and Jan Willem de Vriend, musical director, we won't stay in Venice.

In stead the action takes place 'on the road'. The apothecary literally has become ambulant. It is built-in in a Fiat 500. The cinque cento - the world famous fifties icon of Italian car industry. The Fifties will be there as an important reference, in costumes, especially that of Grilletta, and props, but not in an exclusive way. The performance will be as eclectic as the time we live in.

The idea for the ambulant apothecary stems, as the audience may guess, from Grilletta. But Mengone has executed it very cleverly for reasons of his own, because he clearly is more of a mechanic than interested in medicines, perfumes and the lot. Sempronio has gone along with and invested in Grilletta's idea, not out of genuine interest, but simply because he can't refuse her anything. He would rather have stayed afoot on his piazza in Venice to read his daily paper more comfortably.

The cinque cento, tiny as it is, under Mengone's able hands has turned into a miracle on wheels. Amongst many other utilities, he has managed to create a bathtub in it and a cocktail bar – he certainly knows how to please his secret fiancée Grilletta!

It gradually becomes clear that the cinque cento is no less than a 5th character in the performance, a creation by Grilletta, helping her to get what she wants: a life on her own without her tutor and with Mengone.

And of course the triumphant car is a perfect vehicle in the hands of the director to enhance the comic effect of the eternal fight of several men over one woman. No wonder that Volpino, the suitor/dandy, angry when finding out he has definitely lost this fight, attacks the innocent little car, wants to destroy it.

Grilletta is a strong woman indeed. She pulls the strings.

And off she goes with Mengone, in their home and business on wheels.

The prince of Esterhazy would be much entertained.

Jan Willem de Vriend is a great expert in 18th century music and musical and opera performance practice. Since Haydn's work is not complete, Jan Willem de Vriend made a revision by adding a selection of surprising music from Haydn and his time.

In their longstanding collaboration Eva and Jan Willem have developed an opera style that enthusiastically involves the

audience. They know how to create an intelligent interaction between the singers/performers and the musicians, which in turn invites the audience to freely react to or 'interact' with the performance.

That is why they not only work in the traditional venues with a proscenium stage, but also site specific, in a hotel or church or in the open, all fresco. Wherever they perform their show, they adapt the set in such a way that they realise their goal: the audience close to the singers/performers and musicians, sharing the same space, in which one freely switches from the most intense concentration to sharing a drink, as the action unfolds.

This intimacy is essential in their work and it requires great performance qualities from the singers. Their closeness to the spectators does not allow anything but authenticity.

The informal atmosphere, thus created, most certainly resembles the 18th century performance practice more than the practice of most big opera houses today.

But there is a big difference as well: the audience of today is not addressed well when the performers' histrionic capacity consists of stylistic gestures alone, as in the time of Esterhazy and Haydn. The audience has internalized Freud and all the psychological ram ram of last century. Any spectator of today can only experience authenticity in a stage character when it has the complexity, the inner contradictions, that he/she experiences in him/herself and in others every day.

Eva Buchmann has her way with singers to become authentic in this more complex way. At the same time she never loses her sense of entertainment.

SPECIFICATIONS CONCERNING “FIAT 500 LO SPEZIALE”

Netto weight: 500kg

Additional weight fluids (lemonade, showering water) :

max 30kg

Width : 1323 MM

Length: 2970 MM

Height : 1525 MM

Electrics:

Car battery 12volt max 50ah

Plug and play 220v max 16 ampere

Not accounted for:

Additional weight props and additional weight
persons