

WATCHING DON GIOVANNI IN THE #MeToo ERA:

TRACING MOZART'S
FAMOUS OPERA FROM
ITS SPANISH ROOTS UP
THROUGH TODAY

BY PETER GORDON

WITH ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY BY
DIRECTOR JEAN LOUIS GRINDA



07 MAY 2019 (TUE) 7:00-8:30PM
CPD-3.01, CENTENNIAL CAMPUS, HKU

One can make a case for Don Giovanni being the best opera ever written: music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Lorenzo da Ponte's punchy Italian libretto of the classic tale of Don Juan, the legendary Spanish libertine and seducer. The opera itself — at once dramatic, lyrical and funny — is more than 230 years young, as fresh today, surely, as the day it premiered.

Don Giovanni is a dashing skirt-chasing bad-boy who stands up for his honour, wins a duel and outsmarts those out to get him, even confronting a malevolent poltergeist who comes to dinner — and sleeps his way around Europe; his servant and sidekick Leporello keeps a list of his hundreds of conquests. But this is 2019 ... and whether toward women or the staff, Giovanni, a fully-paid-up member of the 1%, abuses what we now call "power structures".

This talk will discuss the literary history of the Don Juan story and how it, like its protagonist, travelled the world. We will then look at Mozart and da Ponte's version and see how it stands up at a time of changing mores and relations between the sexes. (Spoiler alert: pretty well.)



Peter Gordon is editor of the Asian Review of Books. He gives regular opera talks, translated subtitles and write programme notes for local opera companies, and writes on opera for the local and regional press.

This session is given as a "pre-performance" talk for Opera Hong Kong's production of Don Giovanni given 17-19 May.



Jean-Louis Grinda, Director of the upcoming Opera Hong Kong production, and General Director of Opéra de Monte-Carlo since 2007. Recent works La Gioconda in Palermo, Tosca in Valencia and Torino, and Roméo et Juliette in Genova.