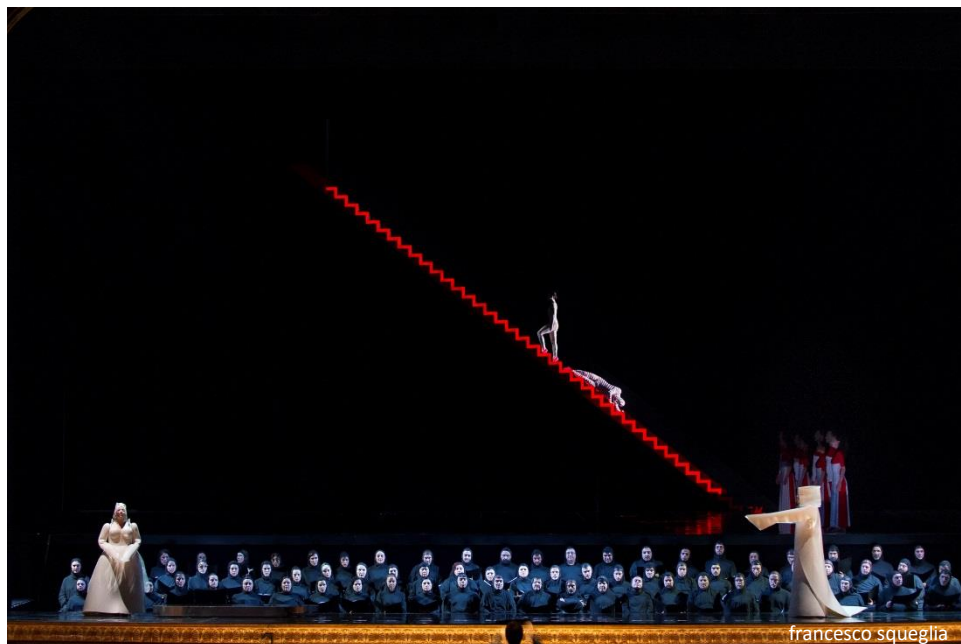


Carmina Burana, between China and the Renaissance

Shen Wei's vision of Carl Orff's score

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Ten minutes of applause greeted the world premiere of the new work by Shen Wei at Teatro di San Carlo on Sunday July 21. Commissioned by the opera house, the Chinese-American artist has reimagined Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, including in his staging all the artistic forces of "Massimo Partenopeo," [the affectionate name of the Theater of San Carlo], under the direction of Jordi Bernàcer: the orchestra; the chorus, guided by Salvatore Caputo; the children's choir,

prepared by Stefania Rinaldi; and above all 33 dancers from the San Carlo Ballet, directed by Alessandra Panzavolta, flanked by seven soloists of Shen Wei Dance Arts.

The medieval world of the *Carmina* has inspired the creation of a "total art," where Shen Wei has designed the sets, costumes, lights, video projections and naturally the choreography, and in which he inserted four new songs taken from the codice of the "Cantiones Profanae," which were orchestrated by Bernàcer based on ancient melodies of the 1200s. Amongst references to the Renaissance, the language of the post-modern, and the traditions of Chinese Opera, the artist has given life to an innovative and sustained narrative, recounting in his own language the passions and themes of human existence: love, youthful irreverence and folly, but also corruption and lust for power. In about an hour and a half of performance, the 4 sections of Orff's masterpiece (Fortune, Spring, Tavern and Love) remain united in a visual and visionary tale, which is based on the unfolding of the circle of life, unpredictable as relentless fate, yet with its eternal return of the seasons. Dancers and singers move together on stage, giving life to stylized figures with costumes akin to a second skin, even animated statues and an anthropomorphic swan, the latter two interpreted by vocal soloists Angela Nisi, Valdis Jansons and Ilham Nazarov. Among the distinguishing particulars of the production are two elements that, according to Shen Wei, were born during his long sojourn working in Naples: water, recalling the sea and the origins of life; and classical statutes, symbols of a city that the artist has said "is a cultural place of immense value." Encore performances run until July 26, before the tour to the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg where Teatro di San Carlo with Shen Wei's *Carmina Burana* will be featured September 23 to 28.