

## Franco Fagioli

“With his latest disc, Franco Fagioli returns to Handel [and] the results are arrestingly, uncompromisingly thrilling.”

*Gramophone*, reviewing *Handel Arias*, May 2018



It takes a special artist to excel in the fiendishly difficult arias that are central to the landscape of Baroque and early *bel canto* opera. Franco Fagioli possesses the necessary combination of technical agility, tonal variety and vocal range required to triumph in works that leave many other countertenors perplexed. As well as gaining a reputation as one of today’s finest Handelians, he also specialises in Mozart and in roles originally written for castrato singers. His astonishing artistry has been hailed by critics worldwide and regularly attracts capacity audiences eager to hear a performer blessed with an uncanny ability to deliver the spectacular runs, leaps and turns of even the most difficult virtuoso showpieces. Ranked among the finest of today’s singers, over the past decade he has worked with conductors of the highest calibre, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, René Jacobs, Marc Minkowski, Riccardo Muti, Christophe Rousset, Riccardo Minasi, Emmanuelle Haïm, Diego Fasolis, Giacomo Sagripanti, Leonardo García Alarcón and George Petrou among them. He also collaborates regularly with the ensembles Il pomo d’oro and Armonia Atenea. In July 2015 he became the first countertenor ever to be signed by Deutsche Grammophon.

Born in San Miguel de Tucumán (in northern Argentina), Franco Fagioli received piano lessons at the Tucumán Music Institute and progressed to study singing, first in his home city, then at the Superior Art Institute, the training academy of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. The impressively accomplished young performer’s career breakthrough came in October 2003 when he won the Bertelsmann Foundation’s 10th “Neue Stimmen” International Singing Competition.

Fagioli soon confirmed the exceptional nature of his talent with a series of major operatic debuts: he took on the title-role in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare* for Zurich Opera in 2005 with great success and has since played Caesar in productions around the world. In 2007 he made his debut at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival under Riccardo Muti. Fagioli made his United States debut at the beginning of 2010 with a triumphant performance in the title-role of Cavalli’s *Giasone* for Chicago Opera Theater. The countertenor’s versatility and virtuosity were again on full display in 2012 at his Salzburg Summer Festival debut, where he drew on the rich lower regions of his voice to great effect in the demanding role of Andronico in Handel’s *Tamerlano*.

In the last few years he has made debuts at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Idamante in *Idomeneo* (November 2014); the Aix-en-Provence Festival as Piacere in *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno* (2016); the Paris Opéra and Opera Amsterdam in the title role of Cavalli’s reconstructed opera *Eliogabalo* (September 2016); and La Scala, Milan, in its first ever production of *Tamerlano* (September 2017). He will make his debut at the Hamburg Staatsoper on 30 September 2018 as Ruggiero in *Alcina*.

He now appears regularly at the world’s leading opera houses and festivals, in roles that also include Handel’s Serse, Ariodante, Riccardo Primo, Poro, Teseo and Bertarido (*Rodelinda*) and Mozart’s Sesto (*La clemenza di Tito*) and Cecilio (*Lucio Silla*), as well as Vinci’s Arbace (*Artaserse*), Rossini’s Arsace (*Aureliano in Palmira*), Pergolesi’s Farnaspe (*Adriano in Siria*) and Zingarelli’s Romeo (*Giulietta e Romeo*).

In recent years Fagioli has appeared on a succession of complete opera albums including *Artaserse* and the world premiere recordings of Caldara’s *La concordia de’ pianeti* (as Apollo) for Archiv Produktion, Hasse’s *Siroe* (as Medarse) and Vinci’s *Catone in Utica*

(as Caesar) for Decca, the latter a work he also presented on tour with Riccardo Minasi and Il Pomo d'Oro at Wiesbaden and Versailles in the 2014/15 season. The Decca recording of *Adriano in Siria*, again starring Fagioli as Farnaspe, was released in November 2016.

Franco Fagioli's partnership with Deutsche Grammophon was launched in September 2015 with the release of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* ("[Fagioli gives] a beautiful and dramatic performance", *The Times*), and continued in September 2016 with his debut DG solo recital disc. This album of Rossini arias, made in company with Armonia Atenea and George Petrou, also garnered widespread critical acclaim, *Gramophone*, for example, praising the singer's "quite remarkable florid agility". His second solo album, a selection of Handel arias, was released in January 2018, it too receiving an enthusiastic critical response. *ClassicsToday* called it "stupendous", and added, "[This is] 80 minutes of great opera and all that that word encompasses, with deeply felt slow arias expressing grief or love sung with smooth, rounded tone and seamless legato, and wilder, fast arias, with their themes of vengeance or rage, spat out with sharp consonants."

For his latest Deutsche Grammophon recording, set for release on 2 November this year, Fagioli has broken new ground by becoming the first countertenor to record the title role in Handel's *Serse*. Joining him on the recording are Il Pomo d'Oro and conductor Maxim Emelyanychev. Fagioli will star in concert performances of the opera this autumn in Ljubljana, Vienna, Paris, London, Lisbon, Toulouse and Essen, and in a staged production at the Karlsruhe Handel Festival in February 2019.

His appearance as *Serse* in a concert performance at Versailles was one of the highlights of the 17-18 season, alongside a reprise of the title-role in *Eliogabalo*, this time for Dutch National Opera; Handel recitals in Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium and Spain to coincide with the release of his arias album; performances of the Pergolesi *Stabat Mater* in Germany, France and Hungary; and a staged production of *Lucio Silla* in Karlsruhe last July.

Fagioli's forthcoming engagements include the above-mentioned performances of *Serse*; Handel recitals with the Venice Baroque Orchestra in Japan; recitals in France and the UK featuring repertoire by Handel and Vinci with Il Pomo d'Oro (March/April 2019); performances of the Pergolesi *Stabat Mater* with Cecilia Bartoli and Cappella Gabetta in Switzerland (April 2019) and at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival (June 2019); concert performances of Handel's *Agrippina* in Luxembourg, Madrid, Barcelona, Paris and London (May 2019), and a staged production of the same opera at the Bayerische Staatsoper (July 2019).

His performances and recordings have been recognised with a number of awards and other honours. In 2010 he was named "Singer of the Year" by Italy's *L'Opera* magazine, and a year later became the first countertenor in thirty years to receive Italy's highest award for music, the Premio Abbiati. In May 2018 he was named "Argentinian Singer of the Year" (2017) by the Argentinian Music Critics Association. The following month, *Handel Arias* was awarded the Deutsche Schallplattenkritik Prize in the "Classical Song and Vocal Recital" category.

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