



2008

2009

Press Kit

**Anselm Kiefer / Jörg Widmann
Am Anfang (In the beginning)**

World Premiere Production

Commissioned by the Opéra national de Paris for the 20th Anniversary of the Opéra BastilleDesign, staging, sets and costumes **Anselm Kiefer**
Composer and orchestra conductor**Jörg Widmann**Staging collaborator: **Ellen Hammer**
Lighting **Urs Schönebaum**
Set assistant **Christoff Wiesinger**
Narrator **Geneviève Boivin**
Clarinet **Jörg Widmann**
Glass harmonica **Christa Schönfeldinger**
Accordion **Teodoro Anzellotti**
Orchestra of the Opéra national de Paris**Contents**

- 1 Press release
- 2 The Work: *Am Anfang (In the beginning)*
- 3 Interview with Anselm Kiefer (extracts from Line 8, No. 25)
- 4 Biographies
Anselm Kiefer
Jörg Widmann
- 5 The 20th Anniversary of the Opéra Bastille

Ticket prices €30 €20 €5**Reservations and information:**Telephone 08 92 89 90 90 (€ 0.337 per minute)
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pfouchard@agendacom.com**Opéra Bastille****Seven performances from 7 to 14 July 2009**

Tuesday, 7 July 2009	- 8:00 pm
Wednesday, 8 July 2009	- 8:00 pm
Thursday, 9 July 2009	- 8:00 pm
Friday, 10 July 2009	- 8:00 pm
Saturday, 11 July 2009	- 8:00 pm
Monday, 13 July 2009	- 8:00 pm
Tuesday, 14 July 2009	- 8:00 pm

* 14 July: free matinée, open admission

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Press release

Am Anfang (In the Beginning)
Opéra Bastille, Paris
7 to 14 July 2009

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Opéra Bastille, Gerard Mortier, Director of the Opéra national de Paris, has commissioned the famous painter and sculptor Anselm Kiefer with the entire creation (staging, sets, costumes) of a remarkable visual and musical performance brought into being in association with the composer Jörg Widmann, who wrote the music. *Am Anfang (In the beginning)* will be offered in seven exceptional performances from 7 to 14 July 2009 at the Opéra Bastille.

This exceptional commissioned work will showcase the policy Gerard Mortier has been conducting at the Opéra Bastille: that of opening lyric theatre up to other artistic disciplines. For this final production under his guidance, Gerard Mortier wanted to bring about a powerful and remarkable encounter of stage, painting, sculpture and music. With this musical work of a new kind - one which is both an installation and a performance - he makes his mark by demonstrating the openness of the Opéra de Paris to the interdisciplinary richness of contemporary art. It is not by chance that Gerard Mortier called on the talent of Anselm Kiefer. *Am Anfang (In the Beginning)* extends the artistic exploration the German artist initiated at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples in 2003 with *Elektra*. After his success with the public with *Monumenta* at the Grand Palais and the commissioning of a major work - *Athanor* – for the north staircase of the Louvre's Cour Carrée in 2007, Anselm Kiefer today has taken possession of the Opéra Bastille front and back stages with an artistic elegy of as never been seen before. Conceived in close collaboration with Jörg Widmann, the German clarinetist and composer considered among the most brilliant of his generation, this determinedly contemporary production reinvents the stage of lyric theatre, and responds to the challenges set before by the great contemporary artists.

With *Am Anfang (In the Beginning)*, Anselm Kiefer creates a completely new visual and musical work of art of international breadth, to forcefully take position in the history of art of music. An agnostic pageant, it describes the chaos and annihilation of peoples and civilizations – where the chosen people met with crushing defeat, mistreated by the great powers of the Fertile Crescent situated between Egypt and Mesopotamia. The "Fertile Crescent" is the name given to the region of the world, one of the cradles of our civilization lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates in the times when God seemed to be a vengeful, terrible and arbitrary deity of inexplicable cruelty. Job's complaints and accusations of the Divine therefore have echoes in the three Abrahamic religions.

Dust and debris lie at the foot of twelve stark towers in this haunting landscape. The entire set carries with it a sense of inconsolable despair, in which the words of Isaiah and Jeremy resound with a pitiless relevance to the present day. Because in the end, isn't History a perpetual series of new beginnings?

A metaphysical work transcended by theatrical illusion, it links the wandering of the Jewish people, incarnated by the Shekhinah, to the annihilated ancient empires such as those of Babylon, Jericho, Persepolis, Nineveh and to the ruins of post-war Germany symbolized by the "Trümmerfrauen", or rubble women, in that same cycle of end and beginning.

A work of exceptional breadth, *In the Beginning* is a production which, for the first time in the Opéra Bastille's history, takes place on all its stages and back stages. Unimaginable perspectives open up before spectators from the main stage, creating a number of smaller spaces where various scenes play out, linked to each other by the words of the prophets and Jörg Widmann's music, whose rich melody casts a spell. The music indeed provides an infinitely subtle accompaniment to what the artist has to say, which is that the rubble of History, like the work of art itself - where all to come has already come to past - is only the beginning concealing the end which it holds within itself.

Am Anfang (In the Beginning) by Anselm Kiefer will be offered in seven exceptional performances from 7th to 14th July 2009 at the Opéra Bastille. The Tuesday matinee, 14 July, will be by tradition, free entry.