



Rufus Wainwright, Cindy Sherman, and Francesco Vezzoli, photographed at Lillie's Victorian Establishment in Times Square. Photograph by Pari Dukovic

In 2009, when singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright premiered *Prima Donna*, an appropriately melodramatic modern opera about an aging soprano (think Maria Callas) on the eve of a comeback gig in Paris on Bastille Day, he knew his biggest challenge would be to keep the work in the public consciousness. "It's opera", he deadpans. "Those either last for 200 years or you never hear of them again." So he turned to contemporary artist Francesco Vezzoli and Cindy Sherman to create a video installation of the grand finale, which debuts in July at the Odeon of Herodes Alitucs, in the Acropolis, Athens. Vezzoli, best known for video works that satirize celebrity, was keen to direct Sherman, who has spent four decades creating provocative conceptual selfies in a whirlwind of solitary introspection.

"Of all postwar artists, she has explored human identity in all its facets in the deepest ways. I don't have expectations. I have the excitement of the novelty," Vezzoli says. And for her part, Sherman is excited to embody the role of a character that, for once, she didn't conjure. "What made me want to do it is the fear that the character is going through. She's old now. Can she live up to her audience's expectations? I think it'll free me up to just let it all hang out." Such talk of divas makes one wonder if there could be too many cooks in this creative kitchen. But Wainwright says he's happy in the audience now: "I have already very much taken the position of the dead composer!"