

The Coronation of Poppea

Opera in two acts by Claudio Monteverdi (1642)



Special Thanks To...

The "Garden" shroud for Seneca - created by Jim Hodges
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APRIL 9, 10 & 11, 1998 AT 8 PM

MARGOT TENNEY THEATER
BENNINGTON COLLEGE

The Coronation of Poppea

ACT I

Prologue -- Amor/Fortune/Virtue
(god and goddesses)

Scene 1 -- Outside Poppea's house -- Ottone, Guards

Scene 2 -- Poppea's Bedroom -- Poppea/Nero/Arnalta

Scene 3 -- Ottavia's Bedroom -- Ottavia/ Seneca/Athena/Nero

Scene 4 -- Poppea's Bedroom -- Poppea/Nero

Scene 5 -- The Gardens -- Poppea/Ottone/Drusilla

Scene 6 -- The Gardens -- Seneca/Liberto/Lucano/A Student

Scene 7 -- The Gardens -- Lucano/Damigella

ACT II

Scene 1 -- The Gardens -- Nero/Lucano

Scene 2 -- The Gardens -- Ottavia/Ottone/Drusilla

Scene 3 -- The Gardens -- Poppea/Arnalta/Amor/Ottone

Scene 4 -- The Gardens -- Drusilla / Arnalta/Liberto/Nero/Ottone/Poppea

Scene 5 -- The Gardens -- Ottavia

Scene 6 -- The Gardens -- Arnalta

Scene 7 -- The Coronation -- The Ensemble

Stage Director..... Tom Bogdan
Music Director..... Amy Williams
Set & Costume Designer.....Sue Rees
Lighting Designer..... Megan Peti
Electronic Music Liaison.....Nathaniel Reichman
Production Coordinator.....Ida Faiella
Production Stage Manager..... Steven Espach
Technical Director.....Alan Del Vecchio

Cast In order of Appearance

Fortune.....Goddess of Fortune.....Shana Onigman
Virtue.....Goddess of Virtue.....Ursula Mathers
Amor.....The God of Love..... Liza Stillhard
Ottone.....Poppea's Former Lover..... Matthew Pillischer
1st Soldier.....Nero's Bodyguard..... Joshua Maurice
2nd Soldier.....Nero's Bodyguard.....Matthew Follette
Poppea.....Nero's Lover.....Irina Petrova
Nero.....Emperor of Rome..... Duffy Havens
Arnalta.....Poppea's Nurse and Confidant-----Clark Loro
Ottavia.....Empress of Rome.....Fonta Hadley
Seneca.....Elder Statesman and Nero's Mentor..... Ryan Barolet-Fogarty
Athena.....Goddess of Wisdom.....Narayani Sharp
Drusilla.....Ottavia's Lady in Waiting.....Rebecca Zafonte
Liberto.....Captain of the Guard.....Nathan Jew
Lucano.....Seneca's Nephew and Student.....Matthew Follette
Student.....Seneca's Student.....Joshua Maurice
Damigella.....A Young Maiden.....Jessica Caterina

Keyboardists.....Nobi Ishida
Elizabeth Kim
Todd Tarantino
Electronic Music Sound Design.....Joel Chadabe
Jesse Ritch
Ethan Newton
Phil Salathé
Larry Wineland
Chris Tilden
System Design.....Nathaniel Reichman
Live Engineer..... Larry Wineland

Production Staff

Costume Shop Supervisor.....Terry Teitelbaum
Assistant Costume Designer..... Maggie Halstead
Assistant Stage Manager..... Megan Kuroki
Program Coordinator.....Suzanne Jones
Poster Design.....Irina Petrova
Reporter-at-Large..... Thomas Nowell

Production Crews

Scenery Lab..... Shana Onigman
Megan Kadel
Anna Zimmer
Master Carpenter..... Steven Howard
Senior Scene Shop Carpenter/Stagehand.....Garin Marschall
Scene Shop Carpenters..... Sarah Gancher
Erin James
Haskell Padgett
Shana Onigman
Julie Roskam
Doug Snyder
Aisha Walls
Elizabeth Ward

Charge Painter..... Kathleen Conroy
Paint Lab.....Fonta Hadley
Jodi Harris
David Karevicius
Lauren DeYenno
Properties Assistants.....Lydia Musco
Rachel Spatz
Costume Lab..... Laura Pattison
Narayani Sharp
Costume Shop Master Assistant.....Anna Zimmer
Costume Shop Production Assistant.....Jeanna Harnden
Costume Shop Assistants..... Alejandra Serrano
Rene Smith
Leah Walsh
Make Up Supervisor.....Elizabeth Corlett
Make Up Assistants..... Seher Aziz
Allison Carey

Master Electrician..... T'ayia Shiner
Lighting Lab.....Jessica Caterina
Farid Nassif
Courtney Reynolds
Matt Sterenchock
Lighting Master Assistant.....Garin Marschall
Lighting Assistants..... Shannon Chmelar
Jason Eksuzian
Elizabeth Esch
Lighting Electrician..... Summer Shidler

Production Run Crew

Stagehand.....Magdalena De Los Rios
Light Board Operator.....Rachelle Michaud
Sound Engineer..... Larry Wineland
Wardrobe.....Heather Beckett

Synopsis

The Prologue opens with a squabble between the Goddesses Fortune and Virtue who each claim to rule the lives of man. Amor, the God of Love, cuts them short by announcing he rules the hearts of men and will prove it in the presentation of a drama. Scene 1 has Ottone returning to the house of his lover Poppea to find Neros' guards stationed at her door. He laments the fact that she has abandoned him for Nero and escapes into the night when the guards detect him. In Scene 2 we find Nero and Poppea in bed, where she uses her powers of seduction to get Nero to proclaim Ottavia's rejection. When he leaves, Poppea announces her dreams of glory to her old nurse Arnalta, who reminds her to beware of Ottavia's jealousy.

In Scene 3 Ottavia is weeping and moaning about her situation when Seneca, Nero's teacher and mentor, comes to offer stoic advice for her to bear her misfortune with dignity—she leaves unconsoled and Nero enters. He also refuses Seneca's sage counsel which was given upon hearing Nero's intention to leave Ottavia and marry Poppea. Nero leaves in a rage. Once again, in Scene 4 we find Nero in the arms of Poppea, who convinces him that Seneca is the only obstacle to his continued reign and their union. Nero orders Seneca's self-execution.

Ottone, in Scene 5, swoons over the loss of Poppea and finds consolation in one who truly loves him, Drusilla, the Empress' lady in waiting, but cannot drive the thoughts of Poppea from his mind.

In Scene 6 Seneca says farewell to his pupils and commits suicide. The first act ends with the capricious Amor tempting Seneca's grieving pupil and nephew, Lucano, to fall under love's spell and roll in the grass with a beautiful young maiden, Damigella.

Act II opens with Nero celebrating Seneca's death and singing the praises of Poppea. The scene is a virtuosic duet between Nero and Lucano, illustrating the combined influences of passion, grief, and wine. The 2nd Scene is in Ottavia's quarters, where she orders Ottone to kill Poppea, with threats of retribution if he doesn't follow her orders. She suggests he go disguised as a woman and gets Drusilla to lend him her clothes. Drusilla happily agrees to help the man she loves.

Scenes 3 and 4 are a cloak and dagger debacle. Arnalta and Poppea fall asleep in the garden before Ottone comes to kill Poppea. He is thwarted by Amor and a chase ensues where the unsuspecting Drusilla is arrested and brought before Nero. The convoluted plot unfolds and the virtuous Drusilla joins Ottone in his exile. Ottavia's implications in the attempted murder give Nero reason to banish her from the throne and Rome—where upon she laments her departure, followed by Arnalta's scene where she shares her bit of wisdom and philosophy. At last Nero and Poppea celebrate their victory in her coronation and in the final love duet Amor has won, even if it means the triumph of passion over virtue and reason.

Program Notes

I had the great privilege of performing in the Skylight Opera Theatre's highly acclaimed production of all three Monteverdi operas, which Stephen Wadsworth directed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When Ida Faiella and I talked about mounting an opera here at Bennington I never imagined it would be Monteverdi's masterpiece. This came about as a result of a discussion I was having with President Coleman, wherein I discovered her passion for Monteverdi's music equalled or surpassed my own. She lit the fire which turned my "not possible" into "well maybe" and ultimately "yes". We thank her deeply for her continued inspiration throughout this project.

As discussions continued I thought that in order to do this as a true Bennington Production we would need to utilize the many talents here and avoid bringing in an early music orchestra from the outside.

So I got together with Nathaniel Reichman and we discussed Monteverdi's score and the practice of varying and experimenting with textures of the orchestra dependent on instruments available at particular performances. We also discussed Monteverdi's play with antiphony, repetition, and echo to create new sonic effects and decided he would love the modern technology available in the Electronic Music Studio of Bennington College. This led to the use of modern keyboard synthesizers and special sounds created by Joel Chadabe's electronic music class from which Amy Williams selected the orchestration you will hear this evening.

Nathaniel and I hope that if Monteverdi were alive today, he would be delighted to hear that his music has not only withstood the test of time but has become more available than ever in this incarnation.

Enjoy!

Tom Bogdan