

Venere e Adone

Naufragio di un mito

libretto Fabio Casadei Turrone and Salvatore Sciarrino
composer Salvatore Sciarrino

world premiere: Hamburgische Staatsoper, 28 May 2023

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A brief introduction to the opera

Salvatore Sciarrino

The shipwreck of a myth. The subtitle is better explained if you look at the opera from the end. In fact, in the epilogue all the characters are recalled one by one by name on stage and the entire cast sings in no uncertain terms: in front of you we acted and you have witnessed a terrible love story. But who won in the end, they wonder, Love or death?

This reminds us of Watteau's painting *The Embarkation for Cythera*. Have the gallant couples we see wandering around just disembarked or have they yet to board the ship? The matter becomes serious. Are they trying to find their way on the island where Venus was born or on the island of the dead they will never leave again?

Even today, mythology is part of our daily lives. Just look around: The train I am sitting on as I write these lines is passing the small station of Florence Campo di Marte. This is the name given to an area on the outskirts of the city, that was once used for manoeuvres and military parades.

Venere e Adone describes the immortal gods with simple cynicism. They embody the parody of all human weaknesses. Also, Adonis, a poor mortal, makes himself ridiculous swaggering around like a teenager; in reality he is a toy in the hands of the gods. Even Cupid, the embodiment of ruthless will, feels compassion for him when he declares he is willing to hide an arrow in his quiver.

Paradoxically, one of the protagonists, the Monster, is the only one to show a glimmer of sensitivity.

The main source of the libretto is the mythological poem *L'Adone* by Monteverdi's favourite poet, Giovan Battista Marino. In the fourth scene, in the duet, a subtle psychological twist is added, borrowed from *Venus and Adonis* by John Blow, Purcell's teacher. A clue in this sense is given by the indication of the time of the following scene (v, Aria di Adone): Hunting with 2 obligato flutes.

