
VENUS AND ADONIS

Masque.

Text by
anonymous

Music by
John Blow

First performance: 1683, London.



Cara lettrice, caro lettore, il sito internet **www.librettidopera.it** è dedicato ai libretti d'opera in lingua italiana. Non c'è un intento filologico, troppo complesso per essere trattato con le mie risorse: vi è invece un intento divulgativo, la volontà di far conoscere i vari aspetti di una parte della nostra cultura.

Motivazioni per scrivere note di ringraziamento non mancano. Contributi e suggerimenti sono giunti da ogni dove, vien da dire «dagli Appennini alle Ande». Tutto questo aiuto mi ha dato e mi sta dando entusiasmo per continuare a migliorare e ampliare gli orizzonti di quest'impresa. Ringrazio quindi: chi mi ha dato consigli su grafica e impostazione del sito, chi ha svolto le operazioni di aggiornamento sul portale, tutti coloro che mettono a disposizione testi e materiali che riguardano la lirica, chi ha donato tempo, chi mi ha prestato hardware, chi mette a disposizione software di qualità a prezzi più che contenuti.

Infine ringrazio la mia famiglia, per il tempo rubatole e dedicato a questa attività.

I titoli vengono scelti in base a una serie di criteri: disponibilità del materiale, data della prima rappresentazione, autori di testi e musiche, importanza del testo nella storia della lirica, difficoltà di reperimento.

A questo punto viene ampliata la varietà del materiale, e la sua affidabilità, tramite acquisti, ricerche in biblioteca, su internet, donazione di materiali da parte di appassionati. Il materiale raccolto viene analizzato e messo a confronto: viene eseguita una trascrizione in formato elettronico.

Quindi viene eseguita una revisione del testo tramite rilettura, e con un sistema automatico di rilevazione sia delle anomalie strutturali, sia della validità dei lemmi.

Vengono integrati se disponibili i numeri musicali, e individuati i brani più significativi secondo la critica.

Viene quindi eseguita una conversione in formato stampabile, che state leggendo.

Grazie ancora.

Dario Zanotti

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

VENUS SOPRANO

CUPID SOPRANO

ADONIS BARITONE

A HUNTSMAN CONTRALTO

A SHEPHERD CONTRALTO

A SHEPHERDESS SOPRANO

Shepherds (Alto, Tenor, and Bass).

Chorus of Shepherds and Shepherdesses, Huntsmen, Cupids, Graces, Etc.

THE PROLOGUE

Single scene

*The curtain is drawn where is discovered Cupid with a bow in one hand
and an arrow in the other and arrows by his side and around him
Shepherds and Shepherdesses.*

Cupid's entry.

Behold my arrows and my bow
and I desire my art to show:
no one bosom shall be found
ere I have done, without a wound,
but it would be the greatest art
to shoot myself into your heart;
thither with both my wings I move,
pray entertain the god of love.

SHEPHERDESS

Come, shepherds all, let's sing and play,
be willing, lovesome, fond and gay.

SHEPHERD

She who those soft hours misuses
and a begging swain refuses
where she would the time recover
may she have a feeble lover.

SHEPHERDESS

The best of the celestial pow'rs
is come to give us happy hours.

2ND SHEPHERD

Oh, let him not from hence remove.

SHEPHERDESS

Till ev'ry bosom's full of love.

CUPID

Courtiers, there is no faith in you,
you change as often as you can:
your women they continue true
but till they see another man.

SHEPHERD

Cupid hast thou many found
long in the same fetters bound?

CUPID

At court I find constant and true
only an aged lord or two.

SHEPHERD

Who do their empire longest hold.

CUPID

The foolish ugly and the old...
In these sweet groves love is not taught
beauty and pleasure is not bought;
to warm desires the women nature moves
and ev'ry youthful swain by nature loves...

CHORUS

In these sweet groves love is not taught
etc...

While this chorus is singing a Shepherd and Shepherdess dance to it.

CUPID

Lovers to the close shades retire,
do what your kindest thoughts inspire.

(Exeunt omnes. The curtain closes.)

FIRST ACT

Single scene

The curtain opens and discovers Venus and Adonis sitting together upon a couch, embracing one another.

Act Tune.

ADONIS Venus!

VENUS Adonis!

ADONIS Venus, when shall I taste soft delights
and on thy bosom lie?
Let's seek the shadiest covert of this grove
and never, never disappoint expecting love.

VENUS Adonis, thy delightful youth
is full of beauty and of truth.
With thee the queen of love employs
the hours design'd for softer joys.

ADONIS My Venus still has something new
which forces lovers to be true.

VENUS Me my lovely youth shall find
always tender, ever kind.

Hunters' music.

(They rise from the couch when they hear the music.)

VENUS Hark, hark, the rural music sounds,
hark, hark the hunters, hark, hark the hounds!
They summon to the chase, haste haste away.

ADONIS Adonis will not hunt today.
I have already caught the noblest prey.

VENUS No, my shepherd, haste away,
absence kindles new desire,
I would not have my lover tire...
My shepherd, will you know the art
by which I keep a conquer'd heart?
I seldom vex a lover's ears
with business or with jealous fears.
I give him freely all delights
with pleasant days and easy nights.

ADONIS Yet there is a sort of men
 who delight in heavy chains
 upon whom ill-usage gains
 and they never love till then.

VENUS Those are fools of mighty leisure
 wise men love the easiest pleasure.
 I give you freely all delights
 with pleasant days and easy nights.

ADONIS Adonis will not hunt today.

VENUS No, my shepherd, haste away.

Enter Huntsmen to Adonis, and sing this chorus.

HUNSMEN Come follow, follow, follow,
 come follow to the noblest game.
 Here the spritely youth may purchase fame.

HUNSMAN A mighty boar our spear and darts defies,
 he foams and rages, see, see, he wounds
 the stoutest of our Cretan hounds,
 he roars like thunder and he lightens from his eyes.

ADONIS You who the slothful joys of city hate
 and, early up, for rougher pleasures wait,
 next the delight which heav'nly beauty yields
 nothing, oh nothing is so sweet
 as for our huntsmen, that do meet
 with able coursers and good hounds to range the fields.

HUNSMEN Lachne has fastened first but she is old;
 bring hither Ladon, he is strong and bold,
 heigh Lachne, heigh Melampus; oh, they bleed,
 your spears, your spears, Adonis thou shalt lead.

(Exeunt singing. Entry: a dance by a Huntsman. The curtain closes.)

SECOND ACT

Single scene

The curtain opens and Venus and Cupid are seen standing with Little Cupids round about them.

Act Tune.

CUPID You place with such delightful care
 the fetters which your lovers wear;
 none can be weary to obey
 when you their eager wishes bless,
 (Cupid points to the Little Cupids)
 the crowding Joys each other press
 and round you smiling Cupids play.

VENUS Flattering boy, hast thou been reading
 by which thou may'st set ableeding
 a-thousand, thousand tender hearts?

CUPID Yes, but mother, teach me to destroy
 all such as scorn your wanton boy.

VENUS Fit well your arrows when you strike
 and choose for all what each may like.
 But make some love, they know not why,
 such as scorn Love's fire,
 force them to admire.

The Cupid's lesson.

(The Little Cupids repeat their lesson after Cupid.)

The insolent, the arrogant,
the M-E-R-: Mer; C-E: Ce; N-A: Na; R-Y: Ry;
the mercenary, the vain and silly.
The jealous and uneasy, all such as tease ye...
choose for the formal fool
who scorns Love's mighty school,
one that delights in secret glances
and a great reader of romances.
For him that's faithless, wild and gay,
who with Love's pain does only play,
take some affected, wanton she,
as faithless and as wild as he.

LITTLE CUPIDS The insolent, the arrogant,
 etc...

VENUS But, Cupid, how shall I make Adonis constant still?
Use him very ill...

(Venus laughs)

CUPID ...to play, my loves, to play;
Venus makes it holiday.

A dance of Cupids.

(After the dance the little Cupids play together at hide and seek and hot cockles till Cupid frightens them off the stage with a vizard mask, and then they come on again, peeping, when Cupid calls the Graces.)

VENUS Call, call the Graces.

CUPID Come, all ye Graces! 'Tis your duty
to keep the magazine of beauty.

Enter the Graces.

GRACES

Mortals below, Cupids above,
sing the praises of the queen of love.
The world for that bright beauty dies;
sing the triumphs of her conqu'ring eyes.
Hark, ev'n nature sighs. This joyful night
she will beget desire and yield delight.

The Graces' dance.

(Gavotte. Saraband for the Graces. A ground.)

(While the Graces dance, the Cupids dress Venus, one combing her head, another ties a bracelet of pearls round her waist etc. After the dances the curtain closes upon them.)

THIRD ACT

Single scene

The curtain opens and discovers Venus standing in a melancholy posture. A mourning Cupid goes across the stage and shakes an arrow at her.

Act Tune.

VENUS Adonis, uncall'd-for sighs
from my sad bosom rise,
and grief has the dominion of my eyes.
A mourning love passed by me now that sung
of tombs and urns and ev'ry mournful thing:
return, Adonis, 'tis for thee I grieve.

Venus leans against the side of the stage and weeps. Adonis is led in wounded.

ADONIS I come, as fast as death will give me leave.
Behold the wound made by th' Aedalian boar;
faithful Adonis now must be no more.

VENUS Ah, blood and warm life his rosy cheeks forsake.
Alas, death's sleep thou art too young to take.
My groans shall reach the heav'ns; oh, pow'rs above
take pity on the wretched queen of love!

ADONIS Oh, I could well endure the pointed dart,
did it not make the best of lovers part.

VENUS Ye cruel gods, why should not I
have the great privilege to die?

ADONIS Love, mighty love, does my kind bosom fire;
shall I for want of vital heat expire?
No, no, warm life returns, and death's afraid
this heart (love's faithful kingdom) to invade.

VENUS No, the grim monster gains the day;
with thy warm blood life steals away.

ADONIS I see fate calls; let me on your soft bosom lie.
There I did wish to live, and there I beg to die.

(Adonis dies.)

VENUS Ah, Adonis my love, ah, Adonis...
With solemn pomp let mourning Cupids bear
my soft Adonis through the yielding air...
He shall adorn the heav'ns, here I will weep
till I am fall'n into as cold a sleep.

OMNES

Mourn for thy servant, mighty god of love,
weep for your huntsman, oh forsaken grove.
Mourn, Echo, mourn, thou shalt no more repeat
his tender sighs and vows when he did meet
with the wretched queen of love
in this forsaken grove.

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