

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON OPERA THEATRE

presents

Scenes from

ARIADNE AUF NAXOS - 3484

by
Strauss

~~DON CARLO~~

~~by~~

~~Verdi~~

NOT PERFORMED.

COSI FAN TUTTE - 3485

by 3486
Mozart

University Playhouse 2:30

April 20, 1963

Opening Scene of the "Opera"

CAST:

Ariadne Barbara Workman
Najade Jody Johnston
Echo LeaAnna Longley
Dryade Sharon Wilson
Zerbinetta Catherine Carlson
Harlekin Robert Wright

ARIADNE AUF NAXES owes the unique position it holds in operatic history as much to the circumstances of the collaboration between Strauss, Hofmannsthal, and Reinhardt as to the individual genius of any one of them. Shortly after Max Reinhardt had "rescued" the first production of Rosenkavalier, Hofmannsthal proposed to Strauss that they show their gratitude with a new version of Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, including a short opera as part of the entertainment. The resulting work was performed in October, 1912. However, owing to the length of the combined play and opera, it met with little success. Ariadne was finally rescued from the embrace of the play and performed with an added prologue at the Vienna Opera on October 4, 1916.

The prologue presents essentially the same justification for the Opera as did Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. In this case, however, Moliere's M. Jourdain is replaced by "the richest man in Vienna," and the time is moved up to the 1750's. As the curtain rises, the Music Teacher is dismayed to learn that his pupil's opera, a serious, idealistic treatment of the classic legend of Ariadne, is to be followed by a troupe of comedians. The antagonism between the opera seria and the commedia dell' arte is thus established. Against a kaleidoscopic background of feverish preparations and minor crises, the Major Domo finally delivers the shattering dictum that the Opera and the Comedy must be performed simultaneously.

The excerpt presented this evening is the opening scene of the Opera itself. Three nymphs are watching over Ariadne, sharing her sorrow and dejection. She awakens and begins her great lament, singing of her former happiness with Theseus, and of her longing for death. The lament is interrupted by the appearance of two comedians, Zerbinetta and Harlekin. Harlekin tries to cheer Ariadne with a serenade, but to no avail. The comedians leave and Ariadne sings of the happiness and peace to be found only in death.

