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SCHOOLS OF MUSIC and DRAMA and PUBLIC PERFORMING ARTS

present

Ariodante

Music by
George Frideric Handel

Libretto by
Antonio Salvi

May 16, 17, 18 and 19, 1985
Meany Theater

Conductor Robert Feist
Director Vincent Liotta
Scene Designer Jeffrey MacDonald*
Costume Designer Jimmy Wauford*
Lighting Designer Claudia Gallagher*

Edited by Walther Siegmund-Schultze.

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*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts Degree.

CAST

in order of appearance:

May 16 and 18:

GINEVRA, daughter of the king Laura Williams
DALINDA, her servant Laurie Haney
POLINESSO, the Duke of Albany Timothy Mussard*
ARIODANTE, a noble of Scotland Marcia Bellamy
THE KING Brian Higham
ODOARDO, man-at-arms to the King . . Stuart Lutzenhiser
LURCANIO, brother of Ariodante Paul Lash

*In partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree.

May 17 and 19:

GINEVRA, daughter of the King Cynthia Oeck
DALINDA, her servant Lesley Chapin
POLINESSO, the Duke of Albany Erhard Rom
ARIODANTE, a noble of Scotland Wendy Ellison
THE KING Brian Higham
ODOARDO, man-at-arms to the King . . Stuart Lutzenhiser
LURCANIO, brother of Ariodante J. Bryne Griffy

PROGRAM NOTES

Handel's *ARIODANTE*, the 250th anniversary of which this production celebrates, marked a decisive turn in the fortunes of its composer. Until 1735 Handel had enjoyed proprietorship of the sole enterprise devoted to providing Italian opera for London audiences, but in that year a rival company, the Opera of the Nobility, forced Handel from his theatre in the Haymarket, lured away his best singers and, with the then-fashionable Niccolò Porpora as resident composer, proceeded to do battle for the fickle public's favor. Handel counterattacked by moving to the newly constructed Covent Garden Theatre, acquiring a new troupe of singers, and producing operas designed to exploit his altered situation. Critics have found *ARIODANTE*, the first of these works written for Covent Garden, to be one of the peaks of Handel's operatic career, possibly as a result of the competition from his crosstown rivals.

For whatever reason, *ARIODANTE* differs in small but telling details from the more stereotyped works produced by the Opera of the Nobility. The libretto of tonight's opera, for example, although it relies on such staples of 18th-century plot construction as disguise and mistaken identity, is much more a story of human passions than the stylized dramas favored by Handel's competitors. As the English musicologist Winton Dean has noted, "the emotional level is that of everyday human conduct . . . the central situation a story of sexual jealousy that might occur in any place, time, or rank of society." Handel's musical setting shows great sensitivity to the drama's requirements, sometimes at the expense of the conventions of Italian *opera seria*. Ginevra, for example, introduces herself in the first scene with a tuneful arioso rather than the more customary recitative, and duets add variety to a genre usually monopolized by solo singing. Even the scoring of accompaniments, often perfunctory in the works of Handel's contemporaries, shows unusual care; and the short orchestral *sinfonia* that prefaces the second-act is one of the highlights of the score.

Such touches, of course, hardly account for the extraordinary longevity of *ARIODANTE*. Rather, it is the range and strength of Handel's musical characterizations that principally distinguish this work from those of his now-forgotten contemporaries, who all too often were content to set texts of widely differing emotional qualities as an unrelieved succession of vocal showpieces. By way of contrast, Handel's music for Ginevra, to cite but one example, faithfully portrays the heroine in moods ranging from happy anticipation (opening arioso), through anger (in her confrontation with Polinesso) to near madness ("Si morro . . ."). For such musical characterizations we may thank Handel's unique genius,—raised to fever pitch in this case by the heat of a long-forgotten operatic war.

—Charles Troy

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR AND DESIGNERS

Handel's opera, like so many other Baroque operas, is based on an incident from *Orlando Furioso* by the 16th-century Italian poet, Ariosto. The story of Ariodante concerns one of Charlemagne's knights, Rinaldo, who goes to England to enlist allies for a battle against the Saracens. While in Scotland on this mission, he is diverted long enough to see that Ariodante and Ginevra, whose love and lives have stood in peril through the machinations of the evil Duke of Albany, are re-united and that justice once again prevails. (Antonio Salvi, the librettist for Handel's opera, kept the story almost intact, only eliminating Rinaldo and leaving Ariodante to solve his own problems.)

In presenting *ARIODANTE*, the challenge was to create an environment for the performers that allows time to expand upon these simple dramatic thoughts with a complexity of vocal detail which, while telling the story, is first and foremost a delight to the ear. The solution for us lay in the medieval tradition of illuminated manuscripts, particularly the insular manuscripts created by the monks of Ireland and England in the seventh through ninth centuries. Their use of highly abstract and complex ornamentation to illuminate text was exactly the non-naturalistic style which we felt the production needed. Rather than create a world of castles, gardens and battlefields, we chose to use words and pages enriched by endlessly intriguing and beautifully complex design, as our venue for telling the story of *ARIODANTE*.

Of all the insular manuscripts, one of the most celebrated and complete is that of the Lindisfarne Gospels, written and illuminated in the last decade of the seventh century to commemorate the canonization of St. Cuthbert. The work takes its name from the monastery of Lindisfarne (located off the Northumbrian Coast of England) where it was created under the direction of the monk Eadfrith, who later became the bishop of Lindisfarne.

Using the style of this particular work as inspiration for our setting, we needed only one last ingredient: the appropriate text illuminations to use as scenery. Originally we decided to use a modern translation of the libretto but the quality of 20th-century language felt inappropriate not only to the Anglo-Saxon style of illumination but also to the Baroque style of Handel's music. Finally, we settled on a late 16th-century translation by John Harrington of the story, as it is told in *Orlando Furioso*.

The language of this period seemed suited to both the visual and musical feeling we have endeavored to create. By using this non-naturalistic style of presentation, we hope to have made it more possible to hear Handel's opera as the charming and dramatic achievement of Baroque music which it is.

Production Staff

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Stage Manager	David Moore
Technical Director	Richard C. Bates*
Set Crew	Kurt Walls
	Ken Harris
	Collier Woods
Assistant Director	Victor Chacon
Assistant Conductor	Tai-Wai Li
Property Master	J. Roo Huigen
Rehearsal Pianist	Theodore Deacon
	Lisa Bergman
Assistant Scene Designer	Betsy Byng
Assistant Costume Designer	Joan Bergstrom
Assistant Lighting Designer	Jonathan Carlson
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	Janet Brelsford
	Jeanne Franz
	Kyle Doughty
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	Martha Mattus
Stitcher	Brenda Wong
	Nancy Bayer
Dyer	Daniel J. Cole
Cobbler	Del Waller
Wardrobe Crew	Cindy Nichols
	Cynthia Cummins
	Paul Shipp
Costume Construction	Drama 291
Master Electrician	Sue Yule
Light Board Operator	Mathew Sutherland

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts Degree.

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

<p><i>Violin I</i></p> <p>Paul Culbertson, <i>concert master</i></p> <p>Shaun McBride</p> <p>Louanne Bean</p> <p>Jennifer Adams</p> <p>Paul Dowling</p> <p>Jim Mihara</p> <p>Rebecca Clemens</p> <p>Ruth Whitlock</p> <p><i>Violin II</i></p> <p>Steven Lee</p> <p>Karen Law</p> <p>Seng-Woon Lim</p> <p>Shelby Eaton</p> <p>Bonnie Hoshiko</p> <p>David Cullen</p> <p>Robyn Bowman</p> <p>Louise McKnight</p>	<p><i>Viola</i></p> <p>Chris Boyd</p> <p>Linda Chang</p> <p>Matthew Underwood</p> <p>Janice Niwa</p> <p>Stella Newman</p> <p><i>Violoncello</i></p> <p>Joseph Bichsel</p> <p>Mike Center</p> <p>Bret Smith</p> <p>Tony Arnone</p> <p><i>Bass</i></p> <p>Toni Rush</p>	<p><i>Bassoon</i></p> <p>Paul Rafanelli</p> <p>Eric Shankland</p> <p><i>Horns</i></p> <p>Margaret Berry</p> <p>Jeannelle Petit</p> <p><i>Continuo</i></p> <p>Elizabeth Foster, <i>harpsichord</i></p> <p>Joseph Bichsel, <i>violoncello</i></p>
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