

Orchestra Members

Violin IHelen Lee
Violin IICarolie Shoemaker
Viola.....Julia Young
Conductor.....Pil-Sung Kim

Continuo

Violoncello.....Joseph Bichsel
Harpichord and Organ.....Glenda Williams

Musical Preparation.....Glenda Williams
and Theodore Deacon

SAT, MARCH 12, 1988 *Comper* *Dr* 299
THE SCHOOLS OF MUSIC AND DRAMA 1988
at the 3-12
University of Washington *Dub*

present the University's 200th opera production and the
School of Music's 44th program of the 1987-88 season:

L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA

(first performed in Venice in 1642)

(sung in Italian)

Music by Claudio Monteverdi

Libretto by Giovanni Francesco Busenello

STAGE DIRECTOR..... Theodore Deacon*
SCENE DESIGNER.....Anna Schlobohm+
COSTUME DESIGNERJeffrey A. Butterworth
LIGHTING DESIGNER.....Michael Wellborn
ACCOMPANIST Glenda Williams
CONDUCTOR.....Pil-Sung Kim

Music edited by Theodore Deacon

Glenn Hughes Playhouse
March 10 and 12, 1988, 8:00 PM
March 13, 1988, 3:00 PM

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Opera Production.

+In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Fine Arts degree in Scenic Design.

CAST (in order of appearance)

OTTONE..... Ann E. Wopat
SOLDIER I..... David Hirsch
SOLDIER II..... Jeffery Hinze
NERO..... John Ransom
POPPEA..... Lesley Chapin
ARNALTA..... Virginia Holland
AMORE..... Cynthia Dario
OTTAVIA..... Cynthia Ann Oeck
SENECA..... Mark Carlson
VALLETTO..... Cristofer Munson
DRUSILLA..... Adriana Giarola
DAMIGELLA..... Margaret Cleveland
SENECA'S WIFE..... Patricia Star
CHORUS I..... Mark Kuss
CHORUS II..... Aaron Brandon Caughey
CHORUS III..... George T. F. Henney

Plot Synopsis

The story takes place in Rome during the ruthless dictatorship of the tyrant Nerone.

Tape 11327 CD 14,930 Act I
SIDE A

Scene i, The Courtyard to Poppea's House. Ottone, returning after several months from a diplomatic mission abroad, arrives at the house of his lover, Poppea. Laden with gifts, he anxiously anticipates their reunion. When he tries to enter, however, he finds his way barred by the sleeping figures of Nerone's bodyguards. In utter despair Ottone realizes the truth: that Nerone sleeps within in the arms of his love. He laments his fate, only to be frightened off by the sleepy voices of Nerone's guard.

One of the soldiers awakens and searches the courtyard for the source of the disturbance. He awakens his companion, who angrily complains about having to stand guard for the sake of the emperor's pleasure. The first soldier speaks of the Empress' humiliation over the love-affair and Nerone's increasing negligence of the affairs of state. Both soldiers agree not to tell anyone of their complaints, muttering that no one is to be trusted any more. As dawn rises Nerone arrives and both soldiers stand at attention.

Poppea comes to persuade Nerone not to leave so soon, but he, fearing scandal if their affair is known, tells her that Rome cannot know of their relationship until his wife, Ottavia, is renounced. Nerone attempts to leave but Poppea will not let him go until she draws from him a solemn vow to return.

After Nerone's exit Poppea exults in her victory of love and looks forward to becoming empress. Her old nurse, Arnalta, is not so comfortable with the turn of events and sternly warns her of the hidden danger of her ambitions.

Scene ii, A Room in the Palace. The Empress Ottavia bitterly laments the humiliation that Nerone has brought upon her. In her fury she calls upon the gods to punish her husband, only to calm herself when she realizes her blasphemy.

The philosopher Seneca enters and offers her words of consolation. Ottavia at first chides him for his ineffective aid, then reassures him of her favor and asks him to plead for her before the people. Ottavia's valet is not so forgiving and vents his anger by swearing to set fire to the philosopher's books and board.

Nerone arrives and informs Seneca of his plan to divorce Ottavia and marry Poppea. Seneca advises against it, saying the action is

counter to the law and the wishes of the people. Nerone cares nothing for the law nor his subjects and would tear the tongue out of those who would speak ill of him. This brings a strong rebuke from Seneca who counsels reason. But force is all that Nerone understands; no matter what the odds or opposition he will marry Poppea. Warning that the wrong side always wins when force and reason contradict each other, Seneca leaves.

Poppea, hearing of Seneca's opposition, decides she must take action against the philosopher in order to insure her success. She begins by reminding Nerone of the pleasures he has tasted while in her arms. For Nerone no praise can be too high to describe her merits, indeed even Rome and Italy are too narrow for her fame. At his greatest point of ecstasy Poppea maliciously tells him of a rumor which implies that Seneca has been ridiculing him behind his back. Furiously Nerone calls his guard and orders that Seneca must die that very day.

IDE B

Scene iii, A Great Room in Poppea's House. Ottone, depressed by Poppea's betrayal, finds access to her house. Seeking her out he complains of her treatment of him. Poppea, annoyed by his remonstrations, tells him to suffer in silence; she says she obeys an imperial command and will leave all others behind in her quest for the throne. Ottone argues that ambition is the lord of all vices but Poppea will have no more of his pleading. She leaves him, saying that she belongs to Nerone.

The argument with Poppea has left Ottone in a worse state of mind than before. In his emotional devastation he even entertains thoughts of murdering Poppea.

Drusilla, who has worshipped Ottone from afar, takes this opportunity to offer him some comfort. In response to Poppea's betrayal Ottone throws himself at Drusilla. His quick change of heart frightens the young woman and she doubts his sincerity. Ottone swears his love to her and Drusilla joyfully accepts him. She happily departs to tell the empress of her new found-love. Ottone too is emotionally elevated by her euphoria but the effect is only temporary, for while he has Drusilla's name upon his lips Poppea remains in his heart.

CD#14,931
Act II

ape 11.328

SIDE A

Scene i, Seneca's Study. In the solitude of his study Seneca finds a quiet refuge for his thoughts far from the insolence and arrogance of the court. Nerone's guard enters with a warrant commanding the philosopher's immediate death. Seneca has expected such a summons and accepts it calmly. The guard, moved by the philosopher's nobility of bearing, wishes that he may die happy in the knowledge that his works will live on to inspire others.

Seneca's wife and two of his friends enter and the philosopher tells them of his intention to commit suicide. He asks them not to grieve, because his soul will now find true happiness in death. His companions beg him not to die, for life offers too many pleasures too be cast off so lightly. Yet Seneca remains resolute in his decision and orders that a bath be drawn so that he may open his veins and die in peace.

This unhappy scene is disrupted by the appearance of Ottavia's valet who proclaims his passion for the serving maid. At first she refuses him but in time she is won over and gives herself to him gladly.

Scene ii, Seneca's Wake. Now that Seneca is dead Nerone and his corrupt companions can revel in the satisfaction that there is no one left to oppose their will. Nerone is made drunk by his friend Lucano and both proclaim Poppea's beauty and the alluring power of lust.

Scene iii, A Room in the Palace. Ottavia has ordered Ottone to appear before her, where she commands him to assassinate Poppea. At first Ottone cannot believe the order that he has been given and his hesitation elicits a savage reproach from the empress. Ottone pleads for time so that he might steel his heart to the task but Ottavia will have none of it. If he will not carry out her command she will tell the emperor that he attempted to rape her and thus condemn him to hideous torture and death. Ottone reluctantly agrees and leaves in search of a disguise in which to accomplish the deed.

Scene iv, The Via Veneto. Drusilla is ecstatic with happiness and looks forward to the day Ottone will be hers alone. Ottone enters, his body and thoughts wandering aimlessly. Drusilla attempts to raise his spirits but he is inconsolable. Gravely he tells Drusilla of the empress' plan to murder Poppea and that he must use some of Drusilla's clothing to disguise his person. Drusilla agrees and leads him off to change his clothing.

SIDE B

Scene v, Poppea's Garden. Poppea falls asleep in her garden, thinking all the time about the day she will become empress. Arnalta sings gently to her and falls asleep herself in the process. Amore enters and vows to stand guard over Poppea. Ottone steals silently in, dressed in some of Drusilla's clothing and filled with loathing for the deed at hand. He hesitates momentarily at the sight of Poppea's beauty and must shore up his resolve to kill her. Just as he is about to stab her Amore appears and frightens him off. Poppea awakens to see what she thinks is the form of Drusilla escaping from the garden. Arnalta sounds the alarm.

Scene vi, A Back Alley. Drusilla awaits Ottone's return, hoping that Poppea's death will finally leave Ottone only to herself. She is captured by Arnalta and the city guard who accuse her of trying to murder Poppea. Drusilla realizes the truth and prepares to die to protect her beloved.

Nerone arrives and is told of Drusilla's attempted assassination. In his fury Nerone orders Drusilla tortured so that she will reveal those who conspired with her in this act. Hearing this Ottone enters and proclaims his guilt. Drusilla attempts to shield him but Ottone will not have her assume his punishment. He tells Nerone of Ottavia's plot and asks that the emperor kill him with his very own hand.

Nerone grants Ottone his life and banishes him from Rome. Turning to Drusilla the emperor praises her courage and her steadfastness for her lover in the face of death. Drusilla wants only to be sent into exile with Ottone, a wish the emperor freely grants. Ottone has learned the true depths of Drusilla's love, seeing that exile with her will be no punishment but an enrichment of his life.

Nerone declares Ottavia's actions unworthy of an empress and orders her immediate banishment.

Scene vii, A Train Station. Ottavia, forced to leave her homeland, laments her fate. Although she considers herself innocent, she feels her sacrilegious woe will not allow her to shed a tear when leaving Rome.

Scene viii, The Throne Room. Arnalta, overjoyed at her mistress' succession to the crown, looks forward to the attention, false compliments, and rise in status at she will receive from people trying to elicit favor from Poppea by way of her old nurse.

The room quickly fills with officials who hail Poppea as empress and shower her with gifts from throughout the world. Left alone, Nerone and Poppea passionately sing of their love for each other.

Of the three surviving full-scale dramatic works by the early Baroque music master Claudio Monteverdi, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642) consistently remains the most popular. While it is not as richly scored as his *La favola d'Orfeo* (1607) nor as tightly plotted as *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* (1640) it nevertheless receives more productions per year than the other two dramas combined. This is partially due to Busenello's wonderfully and insistently amoral plot and keenly etched characterizations. Most of all it is the astonishingly high level of musical invention in the score. If this work can be said to be Monteverdi's masterpiece, it must also be reckoned as one of the great works of all opera.

The problems in mounting this work are considerable. First there is no definitive edition from Monteverdi's time but rather two somewhat disjointed manuscripts, one in Venice and the other in Naples. They slightly differ in text and music, and neither is in the composer's hand. Secondly is the seemingly incomplete nature of both these scores: both look like nothing more than endless stretches of recitative. Upon closer examination both these difficulties can be easily dealt with.

The main differences between the Venetian and Neapolitan scores lie in their setting of the *sinfonie* and *ritornelli*. While both contain excellent settings of these passages we have chosen most of ours from the Neapolitan score whose four-part string textures are richer in sound (and much less often played, most modern editors preferring to use the Venetian passages).

The question of the vocal line support is more difficult. Nearly all of the vocal lines are accompanied in the manuscripts by little more than a staff for figured bass. Most modern editors have side-stepped this problem by scoring these passages themselves in a manner much like romantic opera or Monteverdi's own *L'Orfeo*. While this may create a more familiar sound to modern ears it quite defeats the effect that Monteverdi was trying to create in the original score. Venetian audiences of his time were more interested in hearing the beauty and expressiveness of the voice and felt that heavy orchestration was an intrusion. Also, without the encumbrances of a large orchestra and a conductor, the singers were given greater freedom with their lines and thus were able to present the work more in the manner of a sung play. We have based our performance upon this principle and therefore have assembled a band of instruments similar to the number used in the Venetian opera houses of the composer's time.

Lastly we must deal with the visual presentation of the drama. Busenello's libretto was one of the first to portray actual characters from history, in this case the Roman emperor Nero and his court. Since

the image of ancient Rome seems remote and romantic to us in the twentieth century we believed that a careful updating might better outline the pungent amorality of the plot. In changing the time-frame to pre-World War II fascist Rome we discovered that very little needed to be altered to accommodate the visual concept, indeed many of the parallels were frighteningly similar. In this setting the brutal actions of the characters become more uncomfortable and thought-provoking. We are no longer able to distance ourselves and the drama's message is made more clear.

No matter where a director may set this work it is the genius of Monteverdi that carries us through. It is his particular skillfulness in delineating the emotions of these characters that has made this work the enduring masterpiece that it is.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Manager.....Anne Stewart
Stage Manager.....Rex Vogel
Technical Director.....Malcolm Brown
Properties.....Heather Hudson
Assistant Stage Director.....Leslie Swackhammer
Assistant Scene Designer.....Curt Enderle
Assistant Costume Designer.....Amy Elise Roberts
Assistant Lighting Designer.....Rich Nichols
Assistant Technical Director.....Jeff Montgomerie
Assistant Stage Manager.....Jeannie Wood
Master Electrician.....Veronica Park
Properties Assistant.....Dana Butler
Wardrobe Mistress.....Delia Mulholland
Cutter.....Meri Wada
Costume Shop Manager.....Jim Wauford
Running Crew.....David Chan, Jamie Gossett,
Pam MacAtee, Debbie Packard,
Lauré Smith, Stephanie Wright
Costume Running Crew.....Tom Marino,
Mike Immewahr, Jeff Montgomerie,
Amanda Peringer
Costume Construction Crew.....Ann Brown,
Faith Sohl, Diana Herrman,
Jeanne Arnold
Set Construction, Paint, and Load-in Crew.....Jeff Frokonja
Paul Taylor, Jim Gunn, Robert Taft, Mike Flynn,
Bonnie Lyon, Stan Ruth, John Lovick,
Richard Anderson, Charlie Walsh, Deniece Belha,
Bryan Downs, David Chan, Robert Barnes,
Laura Townsend, Roger Freeman
Light Load-in Crew.....Alonda Collins,
Diane Denchfield, Amy Ensign,
Jennifer Hopkins, Hilary Von Limbach,
Robin Wennberg
House Staff.....Kurt Berhardt, Kip Eversaul
Jeff Coat, John Lovick

Production Office.....Mark Dalton, Julia Garnett,
Leslie Swackhammer
Production Photos.....Mark Dalton, Gary Smith

Special thanks to:

Students of DRAMA 210 and 101
Alan Weldin
Alex Danilchik
Seattle Repertory Theatre
Intiman Theatre,
A Contemporary Theater
Empty Space Theater
Seattle Opera
Bergman Luggage
Randall McCarty
Martin Pike

Ms. Frances Adams
Prof. Montserrat Alavedra
Ms. Susan Albert
Ms. Lila Argo
Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bacharach
Jane C. Bahnsen
Mr. Brian Bailey
Mr. B. J. Baldwin
Mr. and Mrs. Henry R. Balisky
Ms. Genevieve Beach
Prof. and Mrs. James Beale
Ms. Shantha Benegal
Mr. and Mrs. Duane Bennett
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Berg
Mr. and Mrs. William Berge
Mr. and Mrs. Neil Berger
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence
Bergner
Prof. and Mrs. William
Bergsma
Mr. and Mrs. Arvids Berkhoids
Ms. Marie Bernier
Ms. Mary Elizabeth Bernier
Mr. and Mrs. Edward C.
Bittner
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Block
Ms. Sabrina Bobrow
Mr. and Mrs. Kelshaw
Bonham
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth R. Boyle
Mr. and Mrs. Robert
Bridgforth
Mr. Nathaniel Brown
Mr. Robert K. Brown
Mrs. William W. Bruns
Ms. Ann R. Buchanan
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Burke
Mr. Neil Burmeister
Mr. A. J. Butler
Drs. James and Mary Carlsen
Mr. and Mrs. Weston
Chandler
Mr. Yuan-ven Chao
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chen
Mrs. Orland Christensen
Mr. John P. Collins
Ms. Louise C. Collins
Mr. and Mrs. Parker E. Cook
Ms. Susan Coates Cook
Mr. and Mrs. Victor and
Nancy Cook
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Croe
Mrs. Clifton Crook
Prof. Mary Curtis-Verna
Mr. Whitney Briannon Curran
Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Dahlberg
Prof. Robert Dahlstrom
Mr. Dana Davenport
Daylight Masonic Lodge
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Deacon
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Deacon
Mr. and Mrs. Yves de St. Giles
Mr. and Mrs. Robert
DeSimone

FRIENDS OF OPERA

Mr. Paul Deslover
Ms. Dwyla Donohue
Mr. Joseph E. Donovan
Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Dubrovay
Mrs. Howard C. Duff
Dr. and Mrs. James K. Edie
Mr. and Mrs. John S. Edwards
Ms. Helen G. Eisenberg
Mr. and Mrs. Meade Emory
Mr. Walter O. Entenmann
Prof. Robert Felst
Dr. and Mrs. Melvin Figley
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Francis
Prof. Laila Storch Friedmann
Mr. and Mrs. Max E. Gallert
Ms. Adriana Giarola
Ms. Helena Gilbert
Mr. Neal D. Gordon
Ms. Marjorie C. Graham
Mr. Gordon Grant
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Gross
Prof. Frank Guarrera
Ms. Mary Ann Hagan
Mr. and Mrs. George Halsey
Mr. and Mrs. G. L. Hanauer
Mr. Carl Harder
Mr. Donald Harrington
Mrs. Melba Hartzell
Mr. Jerry Hautamaki
Mr. and Mrs. James Healy
Dean and Mrs. Ernest Henley
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Henry
Mr. and Mrs. Lee N. Hepter
Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Herzer
Mr. and Mrs. Paul T. Hayne
Prof. and Mrs. R. Hokanson
Mr. and Mrs. R. V. Hokanson
Mr. James T. Holland
Ms. Mary C. Hopkins
Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Howell
Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Jensen
Mr. H. Randall Johnson
Mr. Robert F. Jones
Prof. and Mrs. A. Kaplan
Dr. Solomon Katz
Prof. and Mrs. G. Kechley
Ms. Elene Kellogg
Mr. Walter Kline
Mr. Matthew Krashan
Mrs. Lita Kresger
Ms. Lynn Krinsky
Mrs. Arthur Langile
Dr. Mark A. Lawrence
Prof. Leon Lishner
Ms. Marilyn Lodmell
Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Loh
Mr. and Mrs. James May
Mr. James R. McColley
Mr. and Mrs. Keith McConnell
Dean and Mrs. David
McCracken
Mr. and Mrs. Donald R.
McVittie
Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Melhart

Dr. and Mrs. John Mensher
Mr. Roy Andrew Miller
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Moll
Mr. Coe Tug Morgan
Mrs. Reginald E. Morgan
Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Morkill
Mr. Richard Moro
Ms. Kathleen Munro
Dr. and Mrs. Daniel Neuman
Prof. Augusto Paglialonga
Mr. John Parks
Mr. John M. Paterson
Mr. and Mrs. Sheffield Phelps
Mr. Stuart H. Prestrud
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Price
Ms. Ann Pryde
Ms. Gwendolyne Remy
Mr. and Mrs. Eberhard K.
Riedel
Ms. Elene Risegari
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Rosinburn
Drs. Cornelius and Penny
Rosse
Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Roth
Ms. Jessica Rotman
Mr. Richard M. Rottenberg
Dr. Wadid Aziz Saba
Mr. and Mrs. Irwin G.
Sarason
Mr. and Mrs. Peter G. Schmidt
Ms. Jean Schweitzer
Ms. Anna E. Senn
Mr. and Mrs. W. Hunter
Simpson
Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Sokolow
Ms. Geraldina Sorrentino
Mr. David Sparling
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth
Standish
Ms. Jackie Striker
Ms. Jean P. Swanson
Ms. Suzanne Szekeley
Mr. James Tanner
Ms. Valerie A. Taylor
Mr. Ronald O. Thompson
Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Thouless
Mr. Michael Vaughan
Mr. Edward G. Wallace, Jr.
Mr. Michael E. Warrenwetsch
Ms. Dorothy E. Wendler
Mr. and Mrs. John Wehlan
Ms. Elizabeth Whistler
Ms. Irene P. White
Ms. Ann Wilkins
Ms. Antoinette Wills
Ms. Patricia Wilson
Mr. Hans Wolf
Women's University Club
Mr. David A. Wood
Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Wood
Mr. and Mrs. D. A. Worcester