University of Washington
Schools of Music and Drama
present Purcell's

DIDO AND AENEAS

May 23, 25, 26 at 7:30 pm
May 27 at 3:00 pm

Meany Studio Theater

2007

King FM 98.1
Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, written before 1689, is usually cited as the first English opera, widely performed and admired for centuries. Yet its origins, its hidden messages, and its intended audience are the subject of ongoing arguments among scholars of Restoration music.

Like the Italian composers who created opera in the early 1600s, British composers of musical drama mined the rich repository of ancient myth to create an authoritative cultural aura. *Dido and Aeneas* is clearly modeled on the mythic musical masques of the Restoration, taking the Fourth Book of Virgil’s *Aeneid* as a general framework for its plot. The librettist, Nahum Tate, borrowed only the most basic elements of the tragic story of Dido and Aeneas, leaving behind the plot complexities of the *Aeneid* and creating far more emphasis on the plight of the passionate and ultimately abandoned Dido. Tate also introduced a popular stage element not found in the *Aeneid*: witches and a Sorceress, echoing the three witches of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (very popular in this period) and numerous other dramas that included witches as symbols of the persistent threat of the possible return of Catholicism in Anglican England.

The symbolism of the witches, of Aeneas, and of Dido, are part of the layers of meaning of this opera. For centuries, the only known performance of *Dido and Aeneas* during Purcell’s lifetime was at a girls boarding school in Chelsea in 1689. But recent research has provided evidence that the opera was composed earlier for the court of King William and Queen Mary – the opera originally contained an extensive Prologue (the music has not survived) with obvious references to the royal couple, and with action that required the extensive stage machinery of a court theater. Other court dramas also had been adapted for this school, and *Dido and Aeneas* appears to be part of that tradition.

At the girls boarding school, the opera was an obvious moral fable of the pitfalls of accepting the advances of charming men. But at the royal court, the opera was an object lesson in the tension between royal duty and passion, with the destiny of Aeneas almost derailed by illicit passion. The stark tragic ending of the opera is unusual, as most operas would evade outright nihilism through some plot twist or a “deus ex machina” that would extricate the characters. But this opera closes with the death of Queen Dido and the departure of Aeneas, just as in the *Aeneid*. Her closing aria, “When I am laid in earth,” sung over a plaintive repeating, descending ostinato bass line, remains one of the most affecting moments in the history of music.

notes by JoAnn Taricani
Associate Professor
Music History
CAST

DIDO, Queen of Carthage ........................................ TESS ALTIVEROS (May 23, 26)
LUCY WEBER (May 25, 27)
BELINDA, Dido's confidant ........................................... HAYLEY BAUDRAU
SECOND WOMAN ....................................................... MADELINE BIDDLE
AENEAS, a Trojan Prince .............................................. RYAN BEDE
SORCERESS ............................................................... JULIA BENZINGER, guest artist
FIRST WITCH .............................................................. SAVANNAH KRAVITZ
SECOND WITCH .......................................................... RACHEL ROUTSON
SAILOR ........................................................................ BRYAN ALMOND
SPIRIT ........................................................................ JULIA BENZINGER, guest artist
DANCERS ................................................................. CHELSEA RENEE WILLIAMS,
LISA T. REINBOLD
BELINDA/SECOND WOMAN understudy ................................ ELIZABETH SCOTT
AENEAS understudy ....................................................... MARTIN ROTHWELL
SAILOR understudy ....................................................... JUSTIN BEAL

ORCHESTRA
Philip Tshopp, conductor
Nathan Whittaker, orchestra manager

VIOLIN I
Olga Hauptman
Laurie Wells

VIOLIN II
Courtney Kuroda
James Garlick

VIOLA
Ruth Sereque

VIOLONCELLO
Nathan Whittaker

HARPSCHEIDT
Françoise Papillon

CHORUS
Julie Anne Parsons, choir master

SOPRANO................................................................. Kaitlin Ehlers
................................................................. Jessica Johnston
ALTOS ................................................................. Justien Beal
................................................................. Drew Dresdner
TENORS .............................................................. Cecile Farmer
.............................................................. Deryl Harter
.............................................................. Martin Rothwell
BASSES ............................................................... Vanessa Williams
............................................................... Tally Thomson
............................................................... Levi Lindsey
............................................................... Ken Sabalza

DIDO AND AENEAS SYNOPSIS

TOTAL TIME ~ 1 HR

SCENE 1: THE PALACE

Dido, the widowed Queen of Carthage, has fallen in love with the Trojan Prince Aeneas. He has been shipwrecked on his way to Italy, where his destiny is to found Rome. Although she is afraid to give in to her feelings, Dido is finally convinced by her confidant Belinda's coaxing and Aeneas' protestations of love. The court celebrates their love.

SCENE 2: THE CAVE

The Sorceress plots Dido's destruction and with her witches she hatches a plan to trick Aeneas into leaving Dido. By assuming the voice of the god Mercury, she will remind Aeneas of his duty to leave Carthage and fulfill his destiny.

SCENE 3: THE GROVE

The lovers, embarked upon a hunt, pause to rest and are entertained by Dido's women. A storm, conjured by the Sorceress, interrupts their idyll and sends the women hurrying back to the palace. Aeneas is stopped by the voice of the false Mercury, who tells him he must leave Dido and sail for Italy. Aeneas laments his fate.

SCENE 4: THE HARBOR

The sailors make ready to leave. The Sorceress and her witches celebrate their victory and plot their final revenge.

SCENE 5: THE PALACE

Dido fears that Aeneas will abandon her. Aeneas, torn, seeks to defy the gods and stay. Dido is furious and forces him to leave. Once he has gone, however, she kills herself rather than live without him.
Crew

Amanda Hauk
Mike Jones
Ali Standley
Jenna Ulrich
Emilija Nakas
Megan McKelvey

Ben Gullard
Colae Johnson
Jason Wonacott
Laura Samorano
Haley Guffy

Arden Bailey
Ken Leung
Yaki Margulis
Ryan Lam
Emily Fairbrook
Elyse Michaels

Production Staff

General Manager for Production ............................................ Anne Stewart
Assistant Stage Manager ...................................................... Thanh Tang
Assistant Set Design ......................................................... Stephen Dobay
Master Carpenter ............................................................... Tres Tracy Ballon
Charge Scenic Artist .......................................................... Jordan Baker
Master Electrician ............................................................... Charlie Pennebaker
Properties ............................................................................. Deanna Zibello
Costume Shop Manager ......................................................... Josie Gardner
Women's Draper ................................................................. Valerie Mayse
Tailor .................................................................................... Deb Skorstad
Carpenters .......................................................... Andrea Bush, Czerton Lim
Scenic Artists ........................................................................ Ruth Gilmore, Arianna Kinsella
Stitchers ................................................................................ Laura Giradot, Christine Smith, Rebecca Quist, Janet English, Christine Tschirgi, Evan Ritter
Wigmaster .............................................................................. Joyce Degendfelder
Crafts, Millinery, and Assistants ........................................ Mara Blair, Lisa Guist, Yoshiko Naoe, Stephanie Raines, Robyn O'Neil, Jessica Strauss
Electricians ............................................................................. Erika Stoll, Joe Terrenzio
Sound Technician ................................................................. Matt Davis
Meany Studio Technician ....................................................... Doug Meier
Meany House Manager ........................................................... Nancy Hautala
Tickets .................................................................................. UW Arts Ticket Office

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