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Anna Bonitatibus explores heroines of antiquity in Karlsruhe

★★★★☆ ?

By Sandra Bowdler, 01 March 2017

This concert featured the formidable Italian mezzo-soprano [Anna Bonitatibus](#) in a programme spanning music composed from the early 17th to the later 18th centuries, and celebrating some heroines of antiquity: Semiramide (ancient queen of Babylon), Lucrezia (the wronged Roman matron from the earliest days of the empire – a nice piece of Roman antri-Etruscan propaganda) and Arianna (Ariadne), abandoned by Theseus on Naxos. She was accompanied by a small but excellent group comprising Anne Katharina Schreiber (violin), Guido Larisch (cello), Nicoleta Paraschivescu (harpsichord and piano) and Kristian Nyquist (harpsichord, at different times), who also performed some instrumental works.

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“vibrato used to colour lines and a delicate trill when called for”

Reviewed at Christuskirche am Mühlburger Tor, Karlsruhe on 27 February 2017

PROGRAMME

Monteverdi, Lettera Amorosa: Se i languidi miei sguardi

Works by Uccellini

[Handel](#), La Lucrezia, HWV 145

Locatelli, Violin Sonata in A major, Op.6 no. 4

[Handel](#), Semiramis riconosciuta, HWV A8: Fuggi dagl'occhi miei

[Haydn](#), Arianna a Naxos, cantata, Hob XXVIb:2

PERFORMERS

Anna Bonitatibus, *Mezzo-soprano*

Anne Katharina Schreiber, *Violin*

Guido Larisch, *Cello*



Anna Bonitatibus

© Frank Bonitatibus

The opening number was Monteverdi's *Se I languidi miei sguardi* or "Lettera amorosa" from his Seventh Book of Madrigals. Bonitatibus entered in flowing blue gown, hesitating on the threshold of the performance space, holding a scroll by a ribbon. Slowly unfurling the scroll, she sang the entire piece as if reading the letter, reacting in the moment to the outpouring of grief entailed in it. Her voice was not only affecting, but strong, entirely even from top to bottom, glowing in every note with exquisite phrasing and great control especially of a subtle range of dynamics. Paraschivescu provided perfect support at the harpsichord. This was followed by a sonata by 17th-century composer Marco Uccellini, quite a pleasing intricate little piece, this time featuring Nyquist on the harpsichord with the violinist providing some quite energetic efforts.

Bonitatibus returned with Handel's cantata *La Lucrezia* (HWV 145), which

 Nicoleta Paraschivescu, *Harpsichord*

 Kristian Nyquist, *Harpsichord*



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Travis Mason, 8th October

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★★★★☆

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No mercy for Ivo Van Hove's *Clemenza*

Jonathan Sutherland, 18th January

Strong musical performances, but Ivo Van Hove's Powerpoint presentation of *Clemenza* at the Teatr Wielki is out of focus.

gives us a highly dramatic account of Lucrezia's shame and fury after her rape by Tarquinius. This time the accompaniment featured the first harpsichordist and the cellist. Bonitatibus was more than equal to the task of rendering the extreme emotions of the heroine, especially her anger and even more promise of vengeance where she dropped her voice to a very scary hiss. It was a delight to hear her excellently articulated coloratura, particularly in the *Adagio*, with gleaming high notes in the ensuing aria, with vibrato used to colour lines and a delicate trill when called for. She was particularly expressive in the finale, running the arioso into the furioso with hardly a breath between, and again dropping to a vindictive hush for the final *La mia vendetta*.

Locatelli's Sonata in A major, a cheery upbeat work, found the *cantabile* just as it should be, lyrical and joyous, the *Allegro* lively and the *Vivace* even more so. Some very expressive cello work was heard here.

After a brief pause, Bonitatibus reappeared in a flesh coloured gown covered with sparkles, with big sparkling earrings. *Semiramide riconosciuta* was a story of considerable popularity in the 18th and early 19th centuries,


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Benedikt Zacher, 24th July

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Francesca Vella, 3rd May

David McVicar's production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* returns for its sixth revival at the Royal Opera House, the refinement of the production matched, almost at all times, by the performances.


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culminating in Rossini's *Semiramide*, a *bel canto* favourite. The version here is the opera of Vinci which Handel massaged into performability. Bonitatibus sang the aria "Fuggi dagli ochhi miei" with great passion, and impressive low notes.

The final work was Haydn's great cantata *Arianna a Naxos* in which Ariadne bewails her fate on that island, with only a fortepiano accompaniment (Paraschivescu). Bonitatibus really let rip here, with her voice totally filling the venue. She acted out the disappearance of Theseus and the Greeks into the distance with bone-chilling involvement, first bewildered, then furious, and again dropping to a just audible level. She finished on a final angry note, decrying Theseus's cruelty. Thankfully, we knew Bacchus would be along soon.

A short encore comprising a jolly song from one of Monteverdi's *Scherzi Musicali* brought the evening to a more than happy end. A wonderful concert from one of the great mezzo-sopranos of our day.

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