

Season 2015/16
Season 2016/17

**Giovanni Battista
Pergolesi**

ADRIANO IN SIRIA

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Alongside Mozart and Schubert, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi has long been a symbol in music history of the tragic figure of genius cut off in its prime. Born in 1710 in the southern Italian city of Jesi, his composing career lasted less than a decade: he was dead from tuberculosis at 26. Though well-known during his lifetime as a composer of serious opera, since then his fame has largely rested on just two works: the wildly popular comic opera *La serva padrona* (1733) and the *Stabat mater*, finished shortly before his premature demise. Of that event Charles Burney

remarked; “the instant that his death was known, all Italy manifested an eager desire to hear and possess his productions ...” - this was not only true of Italy, and led to a considerable, and still persisting industry of attributing to Pergolesi works by other, less famous composers.

Adriano in Siria was the third of his four opere serie, premiered in the Teatro San Bartolomeo in Naples on 25 October 1734. Pergolesi spent almost all of his career in this capital of a kingdom that had for two decades been ruled by the Austrian Habsburgs through a viceroy. However, the Spanish Bourbons also claimed this territory and early in 1734, their army under Carlos, eldest son of the King Felipe V, was on the advance. His forces were victorious and the young prince led a triumphant entry into the city on 10 May. The score is dedicated to the new monarch, but was written expressly to mark the 42nd birthday of his redoubtable and music-loving mother, Elisabetta Farnese. Interestingly the opening scene of Pergolesi’s opera also depicts a victorious army’s entry into a city – one might well wonder what the 18-year-old King Charles made of the emotionally vacillating character of the victorious Emperor Hadrian as then portrayed in Pergolesi’s opera. It was perhaps fortunate for the composer that the young monarch was more fond of hunting than of music, and was well-known for falling asleep during performances. Nonetheless, in homage to the mother he adored and to the operamad Naples public (it would after all have been politic to impress his new subjects), the premiere was a lavish one, with a fine

cast headed by the great mezzo-soprano castrato Gaetano Majorano, called Caffarelli, playing the role of Farnaspe.

The libretto as set by Pergolesi makes many changes to Metastasio's original text, largely in response to the demands of his castrato star. Pergolesi's music for him exploits all facets of his remarkable technique, ranging from long florid melismas with rapidly repeated high notes to tricky cantabile chromaticism. Other well-known singers in the cast included Maria Giustina Turcotti as Emirena, a soprano notorious in her latter days for that common problem of divas, obesity (one colleague described her as "a monster of flesh"). Sabina, the Emperor Hadrian's long-suffering betrothed, was sung by the later very famous soprano Catterina Fumagalli; though ostensibly a subsidiary role for a *seconda donna*, her character is remarkably well-drawn. This is indeed true of all the roles in the work, not least since, perhaps in response to the considerable changes in the text made to accommodate Caffarelli, Pergolesi was careful to balance the number of arias between all the characters. Nor was he afraid of bending the strict rules of *opera seria* for dramatic effect: not always does a character exit after singing an aria, and some of these begin without the customary introductory *ritornello*. Tenor roles, like that of Osroa, were generally regarded as inferior, but here, originally taken by the well-known singer Francesco Tolve, this is hardly the case. Even the lesser role of the tribune Aquilio, another cross-dressing soprano, has music apt to his scheming character.

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Synopsis

In Antioch a triumph is held for the victorious Roman emperor Hadrian (Adriano), who has defeated the Parthians and their king, Osroa. The Parthian king and his vassal, Prince Farnaspe present themselves to Adriano, and their conversation reveals that, during the battle between the opposing armies, the Romans captured Emirena, daughter of Osroa and the betrothed of Farnaspe. The problem for Farnaspe is that Adriano is now enamoured of Emirena, though he is himself already pledged: to the princess Sabina. Further complication is provided by the fact that Adriano's confidant, the tribune Aquilio, secretly also loves Sabina.

Farnaspe requests Emirena's freedom from Adriano, who hides his jealousy. Osroa cannot hide his own fury. Aquilio, wanting Sabina for himself, tells Emirena to pretend coldness towards Farnaspe in order to save him from the Emperor's jealous anger. Farnaspe is thrown into despair, as is Emirena when Adriano declares his feelings to her. The Emperor is himself covered in confusion by the arrival of Sabina. Emirena, Aquilio and Sabina in turn bewail the contrariness of fate.

At night Osroa and his soldiers, seeking vengeance for their defeat, set fire to the Emperor's palace. Farnaspe, unjustly accused of having set the fire himself, throws himself into the flames to rescue Emirena, and though he is taken prisoner, the two lovers are reconciled.

Sabina, convinced that Emirena only loves

Farnaspe, promises to help them escape. Adriano, under emotional attack from Sabina, says that he will give up his new love, but she distrusts him, and Aquilio is still certain that Sabina will be his.

As Farnaspe and Emirena flee they meet Osroa, who, disguised as a Roman, tells them that he has murdered Adriano. The latter now arrives, and accuses Farnaspe of having tried to kill him. Emirena has not recognised her father, and defends her lover by accusing him instead. A furious Adriano has all three thrown into prison.

Adriano knows that Sabina wanted to help Emirena and Farnaspe escape, and has ordered her to go into exile. Aquilio knows that he will lose her whether she goes or not. Adriano is still wracked by conflicting emotions, but is persuaded by Aquilio that if he restores Osroa to his kingdom, the grateful Parthian will give him his daughter's hand. Osroa only wants Emirena to hate Adriano, and to be an instrument of his revenge upon the Roman. Farnaspe, however, urges her to accept, in order to save both her father and her homeland. At length Aquilio's deceit is revealed: Sabina has offered to give up Adriano to Emirena, but he, much affected by her nobility of soul, promises to marry her, restores Osroa to freedom and to his throne, consents to the union of Farnaspe and Emirena, and pardons Aquilio.



ADRIANO IN SIRIA

Cast



Franco Fagioli (*Farnaspe*)



Romina Basso (*Emirena*)



Yuriy Mynenko (*Adriano*)



Artem Krutko (*Adriano*)



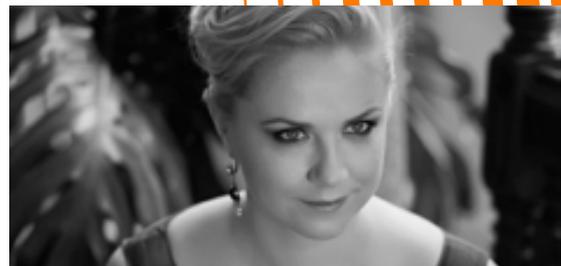
Dilyara Idrisova (*Sabina*)



Juan Sancho (*Osroa*)



Cigdem Soyarslan (*Aquilio*)



Sofia Fomina (*Aquilio*)

Adriano in Siria in concert

Adriano **Yuriy Mynenko*** |
 Artem Krutko
Farnapse **Franco Fagioli***
Sabina **Dilyara Idrisova***
Emirena **Romina Basso***
Osroa **Juan Sancho***
Aquilio **Cigdem Soyarslan* |**
 Sofia Fomina

orchestre **Capella Cracoviensis***
conducteur **Jan Tomasz Adamus***

***CD-recording**
(18 - 26 August 2015)

04 12 2015

Opéra Royal de Versailles (FR)

03 03 2016

Opera Rara @ ICE, Kraków (PL)

16 12 2016

Theater an der Wien, Vienna (AT)



Capella Cracoviensis (orchestra)



Jan Tomasz Adamus (conductor)

