

Mark Adamo

Operas

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Mark Adamo first attracted national attention with the libretto and score to his uniquely successful début opera, *Little Women*, after the novel by Louisa May Alcott. Introduced by Houston Grand Opera in 1998 and revived there in 2000, it is one of the most frequently performed North American operas of the last decade. Comparable acclaim greeted the premiere of *Lysistrata, or the Nude Goddess*, adapted from Aristophanes' comedy but including elements from Sophocles' *Antigone*. San Francisco Opera commissioned and premiered of his third full-length opera, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, in 2013.

ITEMS FOR SALE

Little Women

Vocal score 50483808

Libretto 50483808

"Have Peace, Jo" - soprano, piano 50485219

"Kennst Du Das Land" - baritone, piano 50485220

Lysistrata, or The Nude Goddess

"I Am Not My Own" - soprano, piano 50486188

"Nico's Credo" - tenor, piano 50486189

"Peace: Yes! Of Course..." - mezzo-soprano, piano 50486391

"Too Late in the Day, Sir" - bass-baritone, piano 50483808

"War: Sure. I Know..." - baritone, piano 50486393

"You're Not My Own" - soprano, piano 50486390

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Mark Adamo

Little Women

Lysistrata, or The Nude Goddess



Little Women



Opera in Two Acts

Music and libretto by the composer with additional text by Louisa May Alcott, John Bunyon, and Goethe

DURATION
2 hours

WORLD PREMIERE
Houston Opera Studio
March 13, 1998

CAST
2S, S[=Mz], 3Mz, T, Bar, 2B-Bar

ORCHESTRA
1(pic,af), 1(ca), 1(bcl), 1(cbn)/
1.1[opt].0.0/perc/hp.pf(ce),syn)/str

RECORDING
Houston Grand Opera
Patrick Summers, conductor
Ondine 988



SETTING
The March house in
Massachusetts and, briefly,
the offices of *The Daily*
Volcano in New York City

TIME
The Civil War

PRESS

"Some sort of masterpiece..." Mr. Adamo's libretto, built in rhymed couplets of seemingly effortless naturalness, proceeds with amazing sureness for a first opera. We come to love the complexity of Jo's character but can still be appalled by her selfish cruelty. Her sisters are all limned surely, as are the three men who come as agents of inevitable change. Mr. Adamo's music mixes modernism (actual 12-tone rows) with tonal lyricism, the former usually to advance the action or for humor, the latter for the big effusions. And yet the two styles blend effectively, the modernism not rigorously alienating and the lyricism genuine and heartfelt. Nearly all the big moments in the opera work: Jo's arias, those for her sisters and for the older German teacher (who eventually, maybe, melts Jo's heart) and his recitation of Goethe in both German and English... If you have any interest in new opera, or just want to enjoy yourself, you should make every effort to go.

-- John Rockwell, *The New York Times* (New York City Opera, March 2003)

A beautifully crafted work: shows remarkable confidence, [and] does a brilliant job of molding Alcott's tale into operatic form. Adamo is a spirited, fast-witted composer: like Britten, he can turn on a stylistic dime, running the gamut from open-throated Broadway song to serpentine twelve-tonish writing, mak[ing] fascinating music from the simplest possible material... I suspect that in five or ten years' time Mark Adamo will be greeted with ovations on the stage of the Met.

-- Alex Ross, *The New Yorker* (Glimmerglass Opera, July 2002)

Passionate elegance... The composer's staging, eschewing the realism of the original Houston Grand Opera production, instead placed the narrative in a surreal world of flashbacks illuminating Jo's psychological plight. The result was a spare, emotionally direct production in which past and present melded seamlessly; and Adamo's score, a keen blend of serial elements and vibrant lyricism, sounded affecting and smart... Lyric Opera Cleveland landed a big coup with *Little Women*.

--Donald Rosenberg, *Opera Magazine* (London)
(Lyric Opera Cleveland, Directed by Mark Adamo, June 2004)

Little Women has been produced by over 65 companies in seven different countries since its 1998 premiere.

COMPOSER NOTE
The conflict of *Little Women* is Jo versus the passage of time. Realize this about Jo: alone among adolescent protagonists in classic American fiction (Tom Sawyer, Holden Caulfield, Portnoy), she's happy where she is. Adored by her family, she adores them in turn... Jo knows adulthood will only graduate her from her perfect home. She fights her own and her sisters' growth because she knows deep down that growing up means growing apart...

Lysistrata, or The Nude Goddess

Opera in Two Acts

Libretto in English by the composer after the play by Aristophanes

DURATION
2 hours, 15 minutes

WORLD PREMIERE
Houston Grand Opera
March 4, 2005

CAST
Principal cast of 17
to play 24 characters:
4S, 3Mz, 2C, 4T, Bar,
Bar[=B-Bar], 2B-Bar

ORCHESTRA
1(pic).0.1.asx(barsx).1/1100/
timp.2perc/hp/str (4.4.3.3.2)

SETTING
Ancient Greece

TIME
The present

PRESS

A sumptuous love story, poised between comedy and heartbreak... It works: a minute after the music began, I knew that I was in the hands of a brilliant theatre composer. Adamo's effortless expertise was on display in his 1998 maiden effort, *Little Women*, but he has taken several big leaps forward, particularly in integrating his proudly tonal melodies with more dissonant connective material. Adamo's accompaniments would make a good primer for any young composer learning to write for and around singers. Each strand of the vocal line is punctuated by some perfect short gesture: the orchestral writing is often little more—or nothing less—than a play of light around the voices. Slow dotted rhythms, reminiscent of Britten in his ceremonial mode, give the music a sudden grandeur; as the cities work their way toward reconciliation, the women sing radiant, flowing chorales... It's almost shocking how deep this seemingly light-hearted opera goes.

-- Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

A writer of imagination and intelligence... In this expansion (of Aristophanes's comedy) we are given an opera more about amorous tactics than about universal tranquility. The characters in this *Lysistrata* are best defined by their weaknesses, not their heroism, but Mr. Adamo works hard on their behalf; *Lysistrata's* long Act II aria of farewell is beautifully managed, good to Emily Pulley's equally well managed soprano voice and deeply sincere.... We should be grateful that *Lysistrata* made it onstage.

-- Bernard Holland, *The New York Times*

A feisty liberal heroine... *Lysistrata's* texture is skillfully varied, alternating rapid-fire comic numbers with passages of beguiling lyricism. Adamo weaves seemingly disjointed fragments of melody into cohesive musical statements, and he makes good use of repetition; the motifs have sufficient contour to be comprehensible at first hearing, and they work to bind the musical continuity. Nearly every bit of text was audible, even in ensemble, a tribute to Adamo's skill at word setting and writing for the orchestra... Surefooted, vivid, and distinctly modern.

-- Fred Cohn, *Opera News*

COMPOSER NOTE

I love *Lysistrata's* strut and wit and nerve. [The play] starts from the observation that the bitterest conflicts between people don't start in mere dislike.

When I completed the first draft in September 2000, I was happy with what I'd made of the play, but wondered if anyone would be interested in it. It's ironic, really. We were at peace and the play usually only materialized either as the carrot of sex with which to lure students to the classics, or the megaphone of propaganda through which to protest the war du jour... But, things change... Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* was a serious, if hilarious, protest against an actual war... [and he], almost accidentally, created a near-masterpiece about another war: the unending one between men and women...

My work questions most of the play's assumptions... [So] if you're looking to my *Lysistrata* to reinforce all the comfortable clichés of plucky peaceful women prevailing over clownish warmongering men, stay home.

