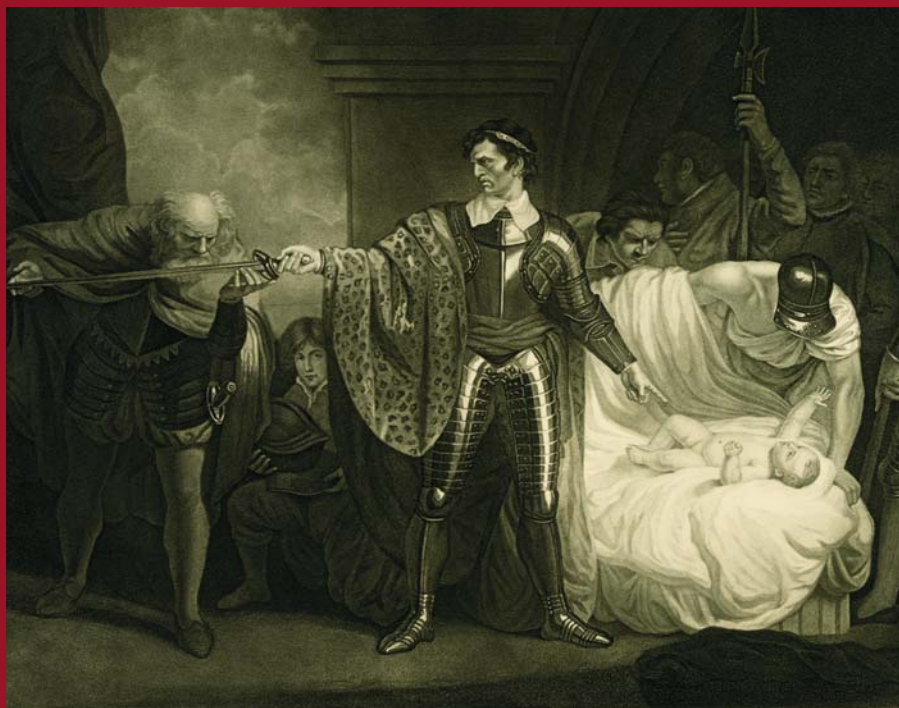


John Harbison

Full Moon in March

Winter's Tale



Full Moon in March



Photo Credit: *Encompass New Opera Theatre*

Opera in One Act
Duration: 33 minutes

Libretto in English by the composer; after the play *A Full Moon in March* by W.B. Yeats

WORLD PREMIERE

April 30, 1979
Boston Musica Viva
Cambridge, MA

ORCHESTRATION

S, Mz, T, B; dancer
fl, ob, bcl, perc, pf(prpf), vn, va, vc

CAST

THE QUEEN: *mezzo-soprano*
FIRST ATTENDANT: *soprano*
SECOND ATTENDANT: *tenor*
THE SWINEHERD: *baritone*

SYNOPSIS

A beautiful Queen has agreed to marry the suitor whose song moves her most. A Swineherd presents himself, and she is both attracted and repelled by him. He never gets to sing his song for her, at least not while alive. Two Attendants describe and comment on the actions and themes of the opera, and eventually take over as the protagonists' voices.

COMPOSER NOTE

In Yeats' astrological-metaphysical system, the full moon has a special place in Phase 15, a phase of complete and unexplainable beauty where opposites unite. March represents the ending of the cycle and the creation of a new one. The characters in the drama meet at a moment of mythic truth remote from motivation or even need to explain.

As in an earlier opera, *Winter's Tale*, the intent is to make an emblematic ritual-opera which seeks to circumvent or ignore certain realistic conventions without sacrificing the bedrock operatic essentials, melody and drama.

Yeats knew well that music was a willful force when combined with his poetry: "The orchestra brings more elaborate music and I have gone over to the enemy. I say to the musician: 'Lose my words in patterns of sound as the name of God is lost in Arabian arabesques. They are a secret between the singers, myself, yourself. The plain fable, plain prose of the dialogue. Ninette de Valois' dance are there for the audience. They can find my works in the book if they are curious, but we will not thrust our secret upon them.'"

PRESS

"...compelling... fluid vocal writing... Harbison has devised a score that bubbles in fits and spasms in the pit, while moving smoothly onstage. The contrasts are attractive to the ear, but they're also interesting for their variety. Because he doesn't waste his compositional energies, following any one of a dozen lines of his counterpoint can be fascinating. Each says something: each is a complete entity unto itself, but each is very much an integral part of the whole."

—Richard Pontzious, *San Francisco Examiner*

Winter's Tale

Opera in Two Acts

Duration: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Libretto in English by the composer; after the play *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare.

WORLD PREMIERE

August 20, 1979

American Opera Projects

San Francisco Opera

Mark Lamos, director

ORCHESTRATION

S, 2Mz, T, Bar, B; 6 male, 1 female chorus

2(pic).2(ca).2.2(cbn)/2200/perc/str



SYNOPSIS

The plot encompasses conflicting deceptions, jealousies, murders, and redemption. Leontes is consumed by irrational jealousy regarding Hermione and Polixenes. His resulting actions cause years of anguish and unhappiness. When Perdita, Leontes's banished daughter, appears sixteen years later, Leontes finally recognizes and accepts her. He discerns the long-hidden truth and all are reconciled. Perdita views the statue of her mother and when Leontes proclaims renewed faith in his marriage, Hermione is brought back to life and descends from the pedestal. Human error has been redeemed.

CAST

TIME

bass

ANTIGONUS, Lord of Sicilia

tenor

LEONTES

baritone

PAULINA, wife of Antigonus

mezzo-soprano

HERMIONE, Queen to Leontes

mezzo-soprano

SHEPHERD, believed father of Perdita

bass

POLIXENES, King of Bohemia

baritone

FLORIZEL, son of Polixenes

tenor

CAMILLO, Lord of Sicilia

bass-baritone

PERDITA, daughter of Leontes

soprano

COMPOSER NOTE

The opera is by no means a transcription of Shakespeare's play, and many of the play's most significant aspects are not present. They are replaced by elements especially suitable to opera, and those elements of the play that suggest the irrational, the symbolic, and the magical are greatly enhanced by the melodic and harmonic life of the opera.

...*Time* as a narrator is given a prominence much greater than in Shakespeare's play, introducing both Acts, and appearing in the action as well. By eliminating the Autolycus subplot, compressing the action, and focusing on the ritual and lyrical elements in the drama, the opera is closer to Greek drama than it is to Shakespeare. Musically a kind of continuous arioso...the opera's dramatic pace is swift and graphic at first, but evolves gradually toward greater inwardness and expansiveness.

John Harbison

Opera and Theater Works

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Citing his most important influences as the Bach Cantatas, Stravinsky (whom he met in Santa Fe in 1963) and jazz, John Harbison's music is distinguished by its exceptional invention and deeply expressive range. He has written for every conceivable type of concert genre, ranging from the grand opera to the most intimate; pieces that embrace jazz along with the classical forms. His prolific, personal and greatly admired

music written for the voice encompasses a catalogue of over 70 works including opera, choral, voice with orchestra and chamber/solo works.

ITEMS FOR SALE

Full Moon in March

Vocal score available through Hal Leonard 50236490

AVAILABLE RECORDINGS

Full Moon in March

Boston Modern Orchestra Project

Gil Rose, conductor

BMOP/Sound 1010

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The Great Gatsby

Libretto in English by the composer, after the novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald with popular lyrics by Murray Horowitz. Please see www.schirmer.com for more information.

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