

July 23, 2020 – Handel’s *Ariodante*

George Frideric Handel’s *Ariodante* is featured on this week’s **Thursday Night Opera House**. Set in Scotland, it was the first new opera Handel presented at London’s newly opened opera house at Covent Garden. Based on several cantos from Ludovico Ariosto’s epic poem *Orlando Furioso*, it opened on January 8, 1735. Among the novelties of the production was the introduction of dance sequences, a first for London.

Prince Ariodante (mezzo-soprano **Anne Sofie von Otter** in a “trouser” role) is engaged to marry Ginevra (soprano **Lynne Dawson**), daughter of the King of Scotland (bass **Denis Sedov**), but has a rival in the Duke of Albany, Polinesso (contralto **Ewa Podles** in the other “trouser” role), who wants to become King and cons Ginevra’s attendant Dalinda (soprano **Verónica Cangemi**) into helping him contrive false evidence that Ginevra has lost her virginity. Ariodante’s brother Lurcanio (tenor **Richard Croft**), also outwitted by Polinesso, becomes enraged and offers to fight any knight who dares defend Ginevra’s sullied reputation. When her own father turns against her, Ginevra not surprisingly goes mad. But when her supposedly dead fiancé Ariodante shows up to defend her (having learned the truth), the King forgives his daughter and makes Ariodante his heir-apparent. Dalinda, who was previously tricked into working with the evil Polinesso, now becomes engaged to Lurcanio, whom she’d loved all along. Happy ending!

Marc Minkowski conducts the orchestra and chorus of Les Musiciens du Louvre in this 1999 recording.

In these highlights from the 2008 San Francisco Opera production of *Ariodante*, **Susan Graham** sings the title role, with **Sonia Prina** as the scheming Polinesso, and **Ruth Ann Swenson** as Ginevra: <https://youtu.be/uw1tmkhwTGU>.

Be sure to join me next Thursday, July 30th, for Gaetano Donizetti’s bloody masterpiece *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Set in Scotland, Lucia (**Andrea Rost**) is in love with Edgardo (**Bruce Ford**), but her brother Enrico (**Anthony Michaels-Moore**) wants her to marry Arturo (**Paul Charles Clarke**) instead, which drives her mad. **Sir Charles Mackerras** conducts The Hanover Band and London Voices in this 1998 recording.

The **Thursday Night Opera House** is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o’clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We’re streamed online worldwide at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE’s Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the **Thursday Night Opera House**