

Winter 2012

## Baroque Jewels

### A Comparative Study of Operas by Handel, Vivaldi, and Other Baroque Masters on Related Themes

14 weeks beginning on Wed., Jan. 18 (section A), and Thurs., Jan. 19 (section B)

This unique course will examine selected works of the two great composers of Italian Baroque opera, George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) and Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) to compare the approaches of each composer to operas on a similar subject or libretto. An additional focus will be an examination of the varied interpretations between selected works of these two masters and those of other Baroque masters, both Italian and French.

In past courses, *Opera con Brio* has offered surveys of the complete operas of these prolific contemporaries, Handel and Vivaldi, the latter now becoming as well known for his operas as the more familiar Handel. Fittingly, the core of this course, Baroque Jewels, will be a comparison of such works as the following:

- Handel's *Giustino* (1737) and Vivaldi's *Giustino* (1724)
- Handel's *Tamerlano* (1724) and Vivaldi's *Bajazet* (1735)
- Handel's *Orlando* (1733) and Vivaldi's *Orlando Furioso* (1727)

Two of Vivaldi's masterful late works will receive special emphasis: *Griselda*, 1735, (performed last summer at Santa Fe Opera) and *L'Olimpiade*, 1734, (to be performed this coming summer at both the Garsington and Buxton Festivals in England, honoring the Olympic year). These works provide the opportunity for a comparison with two additional important Italian Baroque composers, the esteemed "founder" of Neapolitan *opera seria*, Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725), and the equally esteemed Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736), credited as founding comic opera with his charming intermezzo *La serva padrona*. Scarlatti's aria-rich opera *Griselda* preceded Vivaldi's version by just fourteen years; Pergolesi's masterful *opera seria*, *L'Olimpiade*, followed Vivaldi's version by just one year. Newly recorded, it was the hit of the 2010 Innsbruck Early Music Festival.

Additional works have been selected not only with an eye to upcoming performances but also with an eye to articulating how the genre of French Baroque opera effects a change in interpretation. The course will thus not only focus on such diverse interpretations of a similar theme as Vivaldi's *Armida al campo d'Egitto*, 1718, and Handel's *Rinaldo*, 1711, (to be performed by Chicago Lyric Opera in March), but also on Lully's *Armide*, 1686, (to be performed at Glimmerglass Opera in the summer of 2012) and Gluck's *Armide*, 1777, (to be performed at the Julliard School in February.) Likewise the course will examine, to the extent possible, the metamorphosis of Lully's *Thesee* of 1675 (recently a hit of Boston's Early Music Festival) into Handel's powerful *Teseo* of 1713 (performed at Gottingen's Handel Festival last year and receiving a new production at the Chicago Opera Theatre in April of 2012). Informal tours will be arranged for a number of the above performances.

Fortuitously, the Metropolitan Opera begins its winter season with a new production, *The Enchanted Island*, which as their literature notes, "showcases glorious arias and ensembles by Handel, Vivaldi, Rameau, and others." If the Met plants the seeds to start the New Year, let *Opera con Brio* grow the garden. Come join us for a delightful feast.