ABOUT THE ARTIST

Zoila Muñoz, music and stage director, is renowned for her interpretation of Baroque opera. She made her professional debut in Holland in the role of Messagera-Speranza in Monteverdi’s Orfeo at the invitation of Nikolas Harnoncourt. This production received world acclaim and was remembered for many years later. Other productions followed with Jean Claude Malgoire in France and Belgium in Handel’s Xerxes, in the role of Amastre, and in Monteverdi’s L’incoronazione di Poppea, the role of Poppea. As a young student at the New England Conservatory, her first operatic role was Arnalta in L’incoronazione di Poppea, which met with great success. In California Ms. Muñoz acted as artistic director of Apollo Opera for seventeen years, during which time she again appeared as Poppea in L’incoronazione di Poppea. With Jeffrey Thomas and the American Bach Soloists, Zoila Muñoz gave a dramatic interpretation of the Witch in Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas, and with Apollo Opera she performed the role of Dido as well. Other operas include Gluck’s Orfeo, the role of Juno in Handel’s Semele, and Apollo in Apollo and Daphne. As a director, Ms. Muñoz has staged many opera scenes over the years. She now teaches voice on the faculty of UC Davis and is artist-in-residence with Apollo Arts in the Sierra foothills.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2011 | 12:05 PM
ROOM 115, MUSIC BUILDING
Shinkoskey Noon Concert: Percussion Students of Chris Froh
Free

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 2011 | 3:30 PM
ROOM 115, MUSIC BUILDING
Junior Recital: Brent Curriden and Marc Rodillon, guitar
Free

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011 | 12:05 PM
ROOM 115, MUSIC BUILDING
Shinkoskey Noon Concert: Undergraduate Composers Concert
Free

FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 2011 | 3:30 PM
ROOM 115, MUSIC BUILDING
Senior Composition Recital: Compositions of Arbel Bedak and George Sarkisyan
Free

STUDENT RECITAL

The Department of Music presents
Voice Recital
Students of
Zoila Muñoz and Jonathan Nadel

Jonathan Chan, violin
Jason Lee, violin
Devin Hough, viola
Stephen Hudson, cello
Phebe Craig, harpsichord

Program

Scenes from L’incoronazione di Poppea (1642)
Claudio Monteverdi
(1567–1643)

Musical and Stage Direction, Zoila Muñoz

Cast in order of appearance

Amore (Cupido) Alice del Simone, soprano
Ottone, noble lord Kevin Koster, baritone
Poppea, noble lady, mistress of Nerone Katelan Bowden, soprano
Nerone, Roman emperor Pej Ahmadi, tenor
Arnalta, old nurse and confidante of Poppea Hilary Hecht, mezzo-soprano
Seneca, philosopher, preceptor of Nerone Leonidas Constable, bass-baritone
Pallade, goddess of wisdom Britney Haapanen, soprano
Liberto, captain of the Praetorian guard, a free man Kelsey Fowle, bass-baritone
Lucano, poet, intimate of Nerone Kenny Mac, tenor
Drusilla, lady of the court in love with Ottone Elisa Refsdal, soprano
Famigliare di Seneca, friends of Seneca Dominic Di Carlo, tenor,
Milton Carl Jackson II, baritone,
Andrew Cheung, baritone

Two Soldiers

Folawole

Wednesday, April 20, 2011 • 3:30 pm
Room 115, Music Building

We ask that you be courteous to your fellow audience members and the performers. Please turn off your cell phones and refrain from texting. Audience members who are distracting to their neighbors or the performers in any way may be asked to leave at any time.

Also, this performance is being professionally recorded for the university archive. Photography, audio, or audiovisual recording is prohibited during the performance.
SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Sinfonia: Amore (Cupid) the god of Love who governs the fortunes of men and controls their virtue appears as a mediator of all and victorious.

Scene 1: Ottone, the former lover of Poppea, returns at the break of dawn to vent his lingering passion for her. Nerone's guards are asleep at the entrance above her while Nerone is happily asleep in Poppea's arms. As the guards wake up, Ottone flees.

Scene 2: Poppea and Nerone appear distraught at the thought of parting. Nerone confesses that he will repudiate Octavia, his wife, today. Poppea lets him go happy; they bid farewell to one another with tender caresses.

Scene 3: Poppea, left alone with her old nurse and confidante Arnalta, reveals to her the desire to become empress. Arnalta warns and instructs her to put small trust in great men. Poppea maintains she will trust Love and Fortune; Arnalta declares she must have taken leave of her senses.

Scene 4: Seneca speculates on the transitory grandeur of this world after his conversation with Octavia, the empress, as he has seen her suffering. From heaven Pallas Athena foretells Seneca's death, whereupon she is thanked extremely by Seneca.

Scene 5: Nerone enters to tell him that he wants to repudiate Octavia and place Poppea on the imperial throne. Seneca tries to dissuade him on moral and political reasons. Losing his patience, Nerone says he will do what he likes, right or wrong. Poppea will be his wife today!

Scene 6: In peaceful solitude, Seneca receives from the hesitant Liberto, captain of Nerone's guard, the confirmation of the death sentence ordered by the emperor. Firm in his resolve, Seneca prepares to meet his fate. Members of his household gather around, and Seneca consoles them as they try to dissuade him from taking his life.

Scene 7: Nerone, knowing of Seneca's death, is almost delirious with Poppea's love and sings passionately of her praises with the poet Lucan, his intimate.

Scene 8: Drusilla, remembering Ottone's promise of love, rejoices. Ottone arrives and reveals to Drusilla his task of killing Poppea ordered by Octavia. He asks for her help in supplying him with clothes as a disguise and a hiding place.

Scene 9: Poppea exults over the death of Seneca and prays to Cupid to make her his bride; Arnalta tries to calm her and she gradually falls sleep to a gentle lullaby sung by her nurse. Cupid, the seer of all, is there to protect Poppea. Full of doubts, Ottone disguised as Drusilla enters the garden to kill Poppea; Cupid intervenes and stops him. Poppea awakens and Ottone escapes, chased by Arnalta. Love claims that, having saved Poppea, he will see her crowned empress that very day.

Scene 10: Blissfully unaware of the situation, Drusilla enters, but Arnalta is accompanied by Liberto and soldiers who capture her. Nerone questions Drusilla about the attempted murder. Though innocent in order to protect Ottone, she confesses that she wanted to kill Poppea out of an ancient enmity between them. Nerone sentences her to death, but Ottone, having heard everything, bursts in and confesses his own guilt by order of Octavia. Nerone decides to spare Ottone's life, condemning him instead to exile, and confiscates his titles and wealth; Drusilla is allowed to accompany him. The couple contented departs. Nerone decrees the repudiation and banishment of Octavia.

Scene 11: Nerone invites Poppea to ascend the throne. The lovers reaffirm their passion in an ecstatic final duet.

NOTES

L’incoronazione di Poppea by Claudio Monteverdi was first performed at the Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice in the spring of 1643. L’incoronazione di Poppea was the first opera to use real events and people drawn from history rather than classical mythology. The action takes place across three social classes: the upper class in the fashionable world of Nerone, the middle class represented by the philosopher Seneca, and the comic lower class made up of servants and soldiers. The music of L’incoronazione di Poppea has been praised for its originality, its melody, and for the altogether human qualities of its characters. The work helped to redefine the boundaries of theatrical music and established Monteverdi as the leading musical dramatist of his time.

In our UC Davis production I have adapted the length of the opera by removing some scenes while maintaining the thread of the story. With a limited budget I have worked creatively with costumes, sets, and lighting. Our cast comprises young and promising singers performing opera for the first time. One or two of them have previous experience singing in musicals. Phebe Craig, on harpsichord, leads the musical ensemble of a string quartet. With her expertise of the Baroque period we can depend upon her knowledge and firm support.

I trust that this production will open new avenues for our students so they may experience the world of early opera, and in this way increase their musical learning and love of opera for life.

Many thanks to UC Davis Theater Department and to Apollo Opera for their sets, props, and costumes, and to Folawole for the dance.