

Il trionfo d'Amore ['Cupid's Triumph'] Libretto by PIETRO METASTASIO, first set by Florian Gassmann (1765, Vienna).

PROLOGUE Fishing nets and traps lie about on the moss covered rocks in a dimly lit cave deep in the rocky shore of Cyprus, Cupid, dressed as a fisherman, without wings, bow, quiver, or blindfold, responds to the concerns of Venus, his anxious mother.

Cupid has disturbed the entire multitude of the gods, from whose anger he must hide. Venus, declaring his fisherman's disguise ineffective, suggests three groups among whom he could mingle, all of which her son declares unsuitable. In his presence young girls show behavioural extremes, young men either complain or become arrogant, and the elderly lose their composure. Such conduct would betray him. With other plans in mind, he therefore bids Venus meet the angered gods, denounce his crimes, but keep his assailants at bay.

The scene, although remaining by the Cyprus shores, moves to the Palace of Venus where the ornaments, statues, and bas-reliefs illustrate love stories connected with the goddess and her son. In the clouds above the palace, Venus rides in her dove-drawn shell to meet the chariots of Apollo, Mars, Pallas, and Mercury. Among the Graces and Cupids who attend Venus are the Genii who serve the other gods.

Three sections follow, the first two framed by the chorus of Genii who call for Cupid's downfall with added allegations from the four attendant gods who sing, at first in duet and finally in chorus. The third section is similarly framed, but with the previous anger of chorus and gods finally appeased. Section one, begins with the deities questioning the hope of maidens and the loyalty of lovers to such a cruel and fickle god as Cupid. At the suggestion of Venus, they agree to await his return, although Apollo sends his Genii in search of him, advising them not to look in places of repose but in hearts of deceit or grief. Venus, claiming her own anger to be already awakened, invites her companions to enrage her further with their grievances. Mercury, who has already insisted on Cupid justifying his crimes before Jupiter, adds that the youngster insults the gods, tyrannizes mortals, and having usurped the task of educating youth, teaches nothing. Mars, who sees Cupid as the poison of every heart, complains that he sways the heavens and the earth as he likes, and having dared to enter the army, turns fearless warriors into foolish lovers. Mars wants revenge. For Apollo, Cupid's crimes mount daily. He has taken his lyre, and in his hands it no longer inspires the noble minded with the deeds of gods and heroes, but promotes idleness and sloth. Finally, Pallas declares that Cupid puts the entire universe in disarray. He poses as a naïve, blind child to gain trust, but in reality, sees and understands all. He has robbed each one of the gods of some aspect of their powers. Gods and Genii alike call for the end of the cruelty and deceit of this god who promises happiness but creates turmoil.

Venus begins section two, agreeing that anger is justified, but claims Cupid's gifts to be agents of solace, peace, and virtue, only becoming sources of folly and confusion in the hands of his foolish followers. She suggests that Cupid, a child, simply requires a skilled tutor. Each god in turn now responds to her suggestions of Time, Disdain, Labour, and Reason. For Apollo, Time would not only provide the conditions for a minor fault to grow into a major problem, but would also allow a wrong action to become an implanted habit. Mars objects to Disdain, because it can readily become too close a companion to Love. Mercury, who well understands Labour, points out how easily Love can draw the most active heroes into idleness, citing as examples the encounters of Achilles with Briseis and Hercules with Omphale. They conclude that Cupid simply does not fear Time, does not care about Disdain, does not listen to Reason, and attacks Labour. Such defeat forces Venus into a final defence of her son, but to no avail; gods and Genii remain united against him.

As the ensemble and chorus that concludes this section ends, a small, bright cloud approaches which, slowly clearing, reveals Cupid accompanied by his Genii followers.

Venus stands alarmed as Cupid confronts the other deities, declaring that he has further wrongs to confess. Referring to Maria Josepha of Bavaria as the goddess of the Isar (the river that runs through Munich) he confesses having

instilled mutual love between her and the hero, Joseph II of Austria (then King of the Romans). Furthermore, he has arranged for Hymen (god of marriage) to unite the couple. Overcome with the sublimity of this union, the gods declare Cupid the victor and a leader who does them honour. Their place now will be in celebration by the Danube, not in censure before Jupiter on Mount Olympus.

DON NEVILLE, JOSEPH RAFFA

In her book, *Tu felix Austria nube*, Andrea Sommer-Mathis provides a full account of the events and circumstances surrounding the wedding of Archduke Joseph and Maria Josepha of Bavaria for which occasion *Il trionfo d'Amore* and *Il Parnaso confuso* (q.v.) were written. At the time of his first wife's death in 1763, Joseph's only offspring was his daughter, Maria Theresa, and with his coronation as King of the Romans in 1764, pressure increased for a second marriage and a male heir. As eligible royals dwindled from four down to two, Joseph appears to have had a final say which, according to Khevenhüller-Metsch, he announced, "with a heavy heart," on November 11, 1764. Arrangements and negotiations then moved rapidly, with actual celebrations beginning in Munich on January 6, 1765 and continuing in Vienna until the end of the month. *Il trionfo d'Amore* was performed at Schönbrunn on January 25, the official marriage and consecration mass having been celebrated two days previously. The singers, as listed in the printed libretto, were: alto castrato, Gaetano Guadagni (Apollo), tenor, Giuseppe Tibaldi (Mars), his wife, soprano Rosa Tartaglini (Venus), soprano, Elisabeth Teyber (Pallas Athena), and soprano castrato, Luca Fabris (Cupid). Tenor, Giovanni Ristorini sang the role of Mercury. Since time for preparation was at a premium, and since *L'asilo d'Amore* (q.v.) had never been performed in Vienna, its adaptation provided a solution. Tartaglini and Guadagni were favoured with two arias apiece, the remainder of the cast each receiving only one. Fabris was the exception here, since the necessary change to the final encomium provided opportunity to replace the original Proteus aria with a second one for Cupid. In all, four arias (and 92 lines of recitative) were removed, with one of the Pallas arias transferred to Guadagni as Apollo. The humour Muratori admired in *L'asilo* remains in *Il trionfo* as do the amusing reactions of the angered deities to Love's disruptions. Cupid's final claim to triumph within the hearts of Joseph and Josepha, however, was short lived. Josepha died of smallpox just two years later, having suffered her husband's indifference during most of that time.

Settings:

Gassmann (Vienna 1765); Zingarelli (? c.1785); Portugal (*o sia Augurio di felicità* – Rio de Janeiro 1817)