

ARIODANTE

Music by George Frederic Handel

Libretto adapted by Antonio Salvi from Ariosto's Orlando Furioso

First Performed on January 8, 1735, in London

Characters

King of Scotland (bass)

Ginevra (soprano)

Ariodante (mezzo-soprano)

Dalinda (soprano)

Polinesso (countertenor)

Lurcanio (tenor)

Odoardo (baritone)

ACT I

Ginevra, the Princess of Scotland, tells Dalinda, her lady-in-waiting, that she is in love, and that her father, the King, approves. Polinesso, a duke, enters and tries to woo Ginevra, but she rebuffs him. Dalinda, in love with Polinesso, informs him that Ginevra loves Ariodante. Alone, the scorned Polinesso decides to use Dalinda's affections to deceive Ariodante. Ariodante and Ginevra pledge their eternal fidelity. The King enters and offers Ariodante his daughter and the throne. Ginevra joyfully leaves to prepare for her wedding, and Ariodante looks forward to their bright future. Polinesso convinces Dalinda to disguise herself as Ginevra and admit him into Ginevra's chambers that night. Lurcanio, Ariodante's brother, declares his love for Dalinda. Dalinda's heart, however, belongs to Polinesso. Ariodante and Ginevra meet and anticipate their wedding day. Nymphs, shepherds, and shepherdesses dance and sing in a celebration of love.

ACT II

Near the secret door leading to Ginevra's apartments, Polinesso lurks, waiting for Ariodante. When Ariodante tells him of his betrothal to Ginevra, Polinesso says he must be joking, for Ginevra has been granting him her favors all along. Polinesso offers to demonstrate. As planned, when Polinesso knocks at the secret door, Dalinda, dressed as Ginevra, admits him. Ariodante draws his sword and prepares to kill himself, when Lurcanio, who has been watching from a hiding place, restrains Ariodante and urges him to live. Ariodante laments Ginevra's apparent betrayal, and Polinesso rejoices at the success of his treachery. The King prepares to declare Ariodante his heir, when his confidant Odoardo brings him the news that Ariodante has cast himself into the sea. Ginevra collapses after learning the news. Lurcanio asks the King for justice, naming Ginevra as the cause of his brother's death. He gives the astonished King a letter that describes Ginevra's infidelity. Lurcanio challenges any champion of Ginevra to a duel. The King disowns Ginevra, who falls into a fitful sleep.

ACT III

A disguised Ariodante rescues Dalinda from assassins dispatched by Polinesso. Dalinda, who has discovered Polinesso's betrayal, confesses everything to Ariodante. The King awaits a defender for Ginevra. Polinesso offers himself as her champion. Ginevra rejects Polinesso's chivalry, but the King insists that she accept. When Polinesso and Lurcanio duel, Lurcanio deals Polinesso a lethal blow. The King himself then challenges Lurcanio. Ariodante arrives, revealing Polinesso's crime, and asks the King to pardon Dalinda. As the King hurries to tell Ginevra the good news, Ariodante rejoices at the turn of events. Lurcanio once again declares his love to the repentant Dalinda, who now reciprocates. When Ginevra arrives to find Ariodante alive and

herself vindicated, she and Ariodante rededicate themselves to one another, and a triumphant celebration takes place.