

Monteverdi  
Il ritorno d'Ulisse  
in patria  
Gardiner



Claudio Monteverdi  
1567-1643

**Il ritorno d'Ulisse  
in patria**

**Ulisse**  
**Penelope**  
**Telemaco**  
**Minerva/Fortuna**  
**Tempo/Nettuno/Antinoo**  
**Pisandro**  
**Anfinomo**  
**Eurimaco**  
**Melanto**  
**Giove**  
**Giunone**  
**Iro**  
**Eumete**  
**Humana Fragilità**  
**Amore**  
**Ericlea**

Furio Zanasi  
Lucile Richardot  
Krystian Adam  
Hana Blažíková  
Gianluca Buratto  
Michał Czerniawski  
Gareth Treseder  
Zachary Wilder  
Anna Dennis  
John Taylor Ward  
Francesca Boncompagni  
Robert Burt  
Francisco Fernández-Rueda  
Carlo Vistoli  
Silvia Frigato  
Francesca Biliotti

Monteverdi Choir  
English Baroque Soloists  
John Eliot Gardiner

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## Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

### Volume 1 74:46 Act 1

|    |       |            |                                                                    |
|----|-------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | 9:01  | Prologue   | Mortal cosa son io: <i>Humana Fragilità, Tempo, Fortuna, Amore</i> |
| 2  | 10:57 | Scene I    | Di misera Regina: <i>Penelope, Ericlea</i>                         |
| 3  | 10:54 | Scene II   | Duri, e penosi: <i>Melanto, Eurimaco</i>                           |
| 4  | 7:23  | Scene IV-V | Superbo è l'huom: <i>Nettuno, Giove</i>                            |
| 5  | 3:13  | Scene VI   | In questo basso mondo: <i>Coro di Feaci, Nettuno</i>               |
| 6  | 3:52  | Scene VII  | Dormo ancora, o son desto?: <i>Ulisse</i>                          |
| 7  | 12:23 | Scene VIII | Cara e lieta gioventù: <i>Minerva, Ulisse, Coro di ninfe</i>       |
| 8  | 1:57  | Scene IX   | Tu d'Aretusa al fonte intanto vanne: <i>Minerva, Ulisse</i>        |
| 9  | 8:23  | Scene X    | Donate un giorno, o dèi: <i>Penelope, Melanto</i>                  |
| 10 | 1:50  | Scene XI   | Come mal si salva un regio ammanto: <i>Eumete</i>                  |
| 11 | 1:52  | Scene XII  | Pastor d'armenti può: <i>Iro, Eumete</i>                           |
| 12 | 3:00  | Scene XIII | Ulisse generoso: <i>Eumete, Ulisse</i>                             |

**Volume 2 71:28 Act 2**

|           |       |                |                                                                                                     |
|-----------|-------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | 0:30  | Sinfonia       |                                                                                                     |
| <b>2</b>  | 2:01  | Scene I        | Lieta cammino: <i>Telemaco, Minerva</i>                                                             |
| <b>3</b>  | 5:43  | Scene II       | O gran figlio d'Ulisse: <i>Eumete, Ulisse, Telemaco</i>                                             |
| <b>4</b>  | 7:21  | Scene III      | Che veggio, oimé, che miro?: <i>Telemaco, Ulisse</i>                                                |
| <b>5</b>  | 2:32  | Scene IV       | Eurimaco, la donna: <i>Melanto, Eurimaco</i>                                                        |
| <b>6</b>  | 7:01  | Scene V        | Sono l'altre Regine: <i>Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro, Penelope</i>                                   |
| <b>7</b>  | 5:13  | Scene VI       | All'allegrezze dunque: <i>Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo, Coro</i>                                     |
| <b>8</b>  | 1:12  | Scene VII      | Apportator d'alte novelle vengo: <i>Eumete, Penelope</i>                                            |
| <b>9</b>  | 6:31  | Scene VIII     | Compagni, udiste?: <i>Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro, Eurimaco</i>                                     |
| <b>10</b> | 3:05  | Scene IX       | Perir non può chi tien per scorta il Cielo: <i>Ulisse, Minerva</i>                                  |
| <b>11</b> | 2:02  | Scene X        | Io vidi, o pelegrin, de' Proci amanti: <i>Eumete, Ulisse</i>                                        |
| <b>12</b> | 4:55  | Scene XI       | Del mio lungo viaggio i torti errori: <i>Telemaco, Penelope</i>                                     |
| <b>13</b> | 23:19 | Scene XII-XIII | Sempre, villano Eumete: <i>Antinoo, Eumete, Iro, Ulisse, Telemaco, Penelope, Pisandro, Anfinomo</i> |

**Volume 3 38:56 Act 3**

|          |      |            |                                                                                    |
|----------|------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | 7:07 | Scene I    | O dolor, o martir che l'alma attrista: <i>Iro</i>                                  |
| <b>2</b> | 2:11 | Scene IV   | Forza d'occulto affetto: <i>Eumete, Penelope</i>                                   |
| <b>3</b> | 2:28 | Scene V    | È saggio Eumete, è saggio: <i>Telemaco, Penelope</i>                               |
| <b>4</b> | 3:28 | Scene VI   | Fiamma è l'ira, o gran Dea: <i>Minerva, Giunone</i>                                |
| <b>5</b> | 9:30 | Scene VII  | Gran Giove: <i>Giunone, Giove, Nettuno, Minerva, Coro in cielo, Coro marittimo</i> |
| <b>6</b> | 3:25 | Scene VIII | Ericlea, che vuoi far?: <i>Ericlea</i>                                             |
| <b>7</b> | 0:52 | Scene IX   | Ogni vostra ragion sen porta 'l vento: <i>Penelope, Telemaco, Eumete</i>           |
| <b>8</b> | 9:54 | Scene X    | O delle mie fatiche: <i>Ulisse, Penelope, Ericlea</i>                              |





## The Return of Ulysses to his Homeland

John Eliot Gardiner

This recording of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* was made in Wrocław in September 2017 at the culmination of a seven-month exploration of Monteverdi's three surviving operas. To mark the 450th anniversary of his birth we assembled a tight-knit band of singers and players for 33 performances in eight European countries, ending our cycle in Chicago and New York. No doubt Monteverdi would have been dumbfounded if he had been told that such would be the lasting fame of his operas 374 years after his death they would reach an estimated 70,000 listeners (and that is before counting any of the other celebratory performances given in different parts of the world in 2017!). But whereas only 50 years ago his music lay on the margins of audiences' awareness, today staged versions of his operas are relatively frequent, though only *L'incoronazione di Poppea* has so far broken into the canon of mainstream operas. Ironically we can't even be sure that in these three survivors we have the best of what he actually composed, so many works having been lost over the centuries. From what people said at the time the most grievous losses were his *Arianna* (1608) and *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (1641). Yet the ones which have survived are all dramatically gripping, humanly truthful and of dazzling musical beauty.

What was it then that persuaded Monteverdi to come out of operatic retirement in his 74th year and, in a last great burst of creativity, to make such seminal contributions to the new genre? After all, he had recently taken holy orders, and as the busy *maestro di cappella* of St Mark's Basilica there was not a lot of spare time to take on commercial

ventures as well. Was it the opportunity to preach his aesthetic creed to a wider, paying audience that he could not resist? Monteverdi believed that music achieves maximum impact when delivered on the stage, and that when defined by time and space it is best equipped to “move the human passions”, as he himself put it. This is where Giacomo Badoaro enters the story. The librettist of *Ulisse* was a leading member of the Venetian *Accademia degli Incogniti* who were said to be less than impressed by the quality of the operas produced since the theatres first opened in 1637. Badoaro took it upon himself to write a flattering letter to Monteverdi “to incite your Lordship’s virtues to make known to the people of Venice that where strong emotions are concerned, there is a vast difference between a painted image of the sun and the sun itself”. Was that enough to tempt him, or was it the Homeric story of Ulysses’ homecoming to Ithaca, with its timeless themes of fidelity, remorse and passion, that attracted him?

*Il ritorno d’Ulisse* had been at the top of my wish list of works to conduct since I was 21. It epitomised for me all that was most exotic and alluring about Italian music of the early seventeenth century. Performing *Ulisse* for the first time in 2017 confirmed to me its stature as the worthy equal of the more celebrated *L’Orfeo* and *Poppea*, but I believe that all of us involved in the full Monteverdi trilogy found it to be the most compelling and moving of the three. At its première in 1640 *Ulisse* was a rousing success: it received at least ten performances in Venice to packed houses before being taken on tour to Bologna and then revived in Venice the following year. The key to its success

both then and now lies in the fluidity of Monteverdi’s musical discourse, his skill in adjusting to the rapidly changing moods and inflections of Badoaro’s libretto and gliding almost imperceptibly from declamation to more lyrical song-like passages. At the same time he generates bold contrasts and a dynamic interaction between the characters – gods, heroes, as well as lowlife characters (some virtuous, others seedy). Within an overarching musical structure he creates gut-wrenching suspense – how long can the inconsolable Penelope hold out against the three suitors and the whispered arguments of her maid Melanto? Monteverdi makes us see that the carapace of denial that Penelope has formed in self-protection prevents her from accepting that the only person able to string Ulysses’ bow and to dispatch the suitors is the man standing right in front of her – her own returning husband.

No autograph manuscript score of *Ulisse* survives. A single copy made a decade after the composer’s death was discovered in 1881 in Vienna and has been available in facsimile only since 2006. This score, which has missing instrumental lines and a few musical blanks, also departs in a number of significant respects from the nine extant manuscript librettos only one of which appears to have been prepared with direct reference to the score. From this we can trace the places where Monteverdi chose to cut and rearrange Badoaro’s text to make it more dramatically coherent. Badoaro later tactfully admitted that “having seen the opera performed ten times, I can positively affirm that my Ulysses is more obligated to your Lordship than the real Ulysses was to the ever-charming Minerva”.

With no ‘final’ or ‘authentic’ version of *Ulisse* to rely on, the first priority for any performer is to reconcile these surviving sources and to correct the obvious discrepancies and copyist’s errors\*. Monteverdi’s last two operas did not simply crystallise into unchanging ‘works’ with a fixed text, but as living organisms they were constantly subject to layers of additions, cuts, transpositions, and revisions. Each attempt to revive them in our day will perforce come up with a different solution.

When it came to plugging those gaps where no music survives in the Vienna score it seemed preferable to draw on Monteverdi’s own music, albeit from an earlier period, rather than to scan for other contemporary music by his pupils or peers. For despite the marked differences of form and idiom and the 33 years that separate *Ulisse* from his first opera *L’Orfeo*, there are clear fingerprints of Monteverdi’s consistent approach to word-setting in both works – evidence of his commitment to the ideals of what he called ‘imitation’ and ‘representation’. So for the chorus of Naiads in Act 1 scene VI, as they rescue Ulysses’ belongings and treasures from the shore, we found a neat fit with his three-part *balletto* ‘De la bellezza le dovute lodi’ from his *Scherzi musicali* (1607). For the *ballo greco* in Act 2 scene VI where the suitors intensify their wooing of Penelope we have gone back to three sections of Monteverdi’s choral ballet *Tirsi e Clori* of 1615 (probably his first semi-theatrical work to be composed in Venice and published four years later in his Seventh Book of Madrigals). Finally, we found room for brief, anguished *entrates* from his *Ballo delle ingrate* (1608, but published only two years before

the *Ulisse* première) for the dumbshow of the suitors’ failed attempts to string Ulysses’ bow in Act 2 scene XII, and a capricious fragment to announce Ericlea’s entry in Act 3 scene VIII.

Decisions regarding all the remaining editorial and performance practice issues flowed from the initial premise – to perform the trilogy, not in proscenium theatres equipped with lavish stage machinery, decor and props, but in concert halls (the exception being the *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice where we performed two complete cycles on a thrust forestage). Our target was to reach beyond the demographic of opera-going aficionados and to connect with a wider and younger audience for Monteverdi. By presenting his trilogy in vivid but pared-down stagings we aimed to communicate the radical and explosive force of these great music dramas, the emotional depths they plumb, and their strikingly modern feel, without losing the intrinsic intimacy of form and dialectic. We know (this time from another of his librettists, Michelangelo Torcigliani) that Monteverdi was always on the look out for libretti with shifting moods – “because they offer him the opportunity of showing the marvels of his art with a full range of pathos, adapting his notes to the words and the passions in such a way that the singer laughs, cries, becomes enraged, compassionate, and does everything else they ask of him; meanwhile the listener is drawn by the same impetus into experiencing the variety and force of those same passions”.

A large portion of our rehearsals was devoted to exploring Monteverdi’s brilliant fusion of music and words and to making sure that both singers



and instrumentalists fully engaged with the text. Following the precepts of his contemporary Marco da Gagliano, himself a composer of operas, we were seeking “to chisel out the syllables so as to make the words well understood” through a delivery not simply accurate in linguistic pronunciation and inflection, but given with a sensual relish. Our language coach, Matteo Dalle Fratte, went to great lengths to point out to the cast the mesmerising beauty of sung Italian when consonants are projected percussively and expressively in counterpoint to the smooth legato flow of the vowels. This applies not just to double consonants but to comma punctuation, agogic accents, word repetitions and exclamations. Only once the technique has been fully mastered by the singer-actors (as opposed to the dreaded ‘singerese’ – the disease of so many opera singers), can this produce a frisson in the way words will be received by the listener; but it also enhances the expressive vocabulary of Monteverdi’s word-setting and his cunning way of imitating the accents of speech. The slight anticipation of the incoming consonant and a minuscule delay before the vowel mirrors the thought processes of the narration. To me this is analogous to the ways Monteverdi uses both rhythm and counterpoint. In his operas Monteverdi habitually uses an alternation of duple and triple metre against an implied *tactus* (a regular unvarying beat). That is where the rhythmic frisson originates. Added to this is the harmonic tension he sets up between his vocal lines and the supporting *basso continuo*. The latter normally proceeds with a regular harmonic rhythm or pulse, but burgeons into

expressive dissonances at key moments when he contrives that these two complementary lines should collide and clash.

Imagine my delight, then, when I discovered that the late stage director Sir Peter Hall pointed to something strikingly similar in the technique used by Shakespeare in his great tragedies and late plays which were written at exactly the same time as Monteverdi was setting out as a composer of operas. Hall refers to “a freedom in verse which is perfectly miraculous. [In *The Winter’s Tale*] Leontes’ twisted passion and paranoia is accurately expressed by his clotted, irregular rhythms and mis-accents. But these irregularities only make emotional sense and can only affect an audience if the actor knows the underlying regularity beneath them. He must revel in the cross-rhythms, ride the irregularities and use the bumps in the smoothness for emotional purposes.” So far so uncannily parallel. Hall compared playing the mature verse of Shakespeare to the challenges facing a great jazz player – though this applies equally well, I feel, to a singer or continuo player interpreting Monteverdi’s opera scores: “the beat must be kept, the rhythm always sensed. But it is the tension between that regularity and the irregularity of the speech [or in Monteverdi’s case, the vocal line set against the *basso continuo*] which expresses the emotional turmoil. The nearer the verse gets to collapsing, the more tortured and emotional the expression. But it must never collapse, any more than the jazz musician can ever miss the beat or be ‘out’. The actor must risk rhythmical disintegration, but never surrender to it. What the audience receives

is therefore unexpected, dangerous, and always unpredictable” [*Exposed by the Mask*]. John Berger expresses something similar: “The way singers play with or defy the linearity of time has something in common with what acrobats and jugglers do with the force of gravity... The tempo, the beat, the loops, the repetitions of a song construct a shelter from the flow of linear time: a shelter in which future, present and past can console, provoke, ironise and inspire one another” [*Confabulations*].

In *Ulisse* we can hear how Monteverdi’s skilful transitions from conversational ‘sung speech’ (recitative) to pure song (aria) and a combination of the two (arioso) serve to intensify the expression of the characters’ temperament and states of mind. In practice each performer needs to be constantly aware of the direction of the discourse – of Monteverdi’s crucial distinction between narration (diegesis) and representation (mimesis) – and how this impacts on the forward motion of the action as well as the emotional content and ‘tone’ of each monologue or exchange. This distinction was something new in the evolution of music-theatre at the time, and it developed in parallel with the techniques Shakespeare was then exploring in his late plays. When Hamlet says in Act 2 scene II “Now I am alone. Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!” – quite obviously he is not alone, but in fact addressing a noisy audience at The Globe theatre. The critical thing is how to create the illusion of intimacy: how to reveal raw and highly personal emotion with overwhelming intensity, but without anyone having to force their voices.

In our performances rather than consign the

instrumentalists to a pit we decided to follow Marco da Gagliano’s injunction: “Be advised that the instruments which must accompany the solo voices should be situated in a position to look the actors in the face, so that hearing each other better they can proceed together”. This had two additional advantages: it allowed the audience to have ‘the engine room’ of the drama in full view, with the instrumentalists deployed in two symmetrical half-moons, and to witness the interaction of players and singers at every twist and turn. And since we were playing in medium-to-large concert halls and not constrained by the economically austere and spatially restricted *instrumentarium* of the Venetian commercial theatres of the 1640s, we opted to augment the continuo group to include a *lirone*, a harp and pairs of recorders and *cornetti*, without compromising the intimacy of dialogue or the projection of the words. Similarly we underpinned with vigorous string articulation the passages where Monteverdi resorts to a warlike trope in his *conciato* (agitated) style to convey contempt, ire or bellicosity. This is analogous to his practice in his *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (1638) and to what he prescribes for Ulisse’s wrestling match with Iro and the *sinfonia da guerra* which concludes Act 2. Elsewhere from time to time we introduced improvised lines to emphasise the distinction between the gods and the humans, and between the benign pastoral realm and the suffocating world of Penelope’s court.\*\*

This juxtaposition of two opposed worlds is strikingly similar to those one finds in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, where the forest stands for freedom,

natural goodness and life in harmony with Nature, while the court, peopled by sycophants and pretenders, symbolises all that is tainted and treacherous. Might we therefore consider Monteverdi's *Ulisse* to be a kind of Shakespearean anti-comedy? After all, it culminates in a return to the marriage bed following a tale of unravelling and mistaken identity before the natural order is finally restored. No other plot of the period has this kind of trajectory apart from Shakespearean tragicomedy. But the parallels with the Bard extend well beyond this. In his portrayal of Ulysses, and still more of Penelope, Monteverdi shows his deep concern, as Shakespeare does in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, for an interior world – both playwright and composer exploring complex thoughts and feelings that extend beyond words and actions. *Il ritorno d'Ulisse*, Monteverdi's antepenultimate opera, marks another step in a life spent transforming music – from an act of skilled artifice reflecting the harmony of the spheres into a dramatised form of expression rooted in human truths and emotions. This amounted to a fundamental switch – from a musical language that spoke primarily in metaphysical affirmatives to one capable of mirroring a world full of squalor, depravity but also of redemptive love. It happens to coincide exactly with one of those turbulent periods in the history of painting, when artists such as Velázquez, Rembrandt, or Artemesia Gentileschi, all at the height of their powers, were unleashing their energy and taking equivalent liberties with hallowed conventions.

Is there any other opera that culminates in a duet in which the two protagonists sing together for

the very first time? They have not spoken in twenty years. He returns after being reported missing. She has remained steadfast and unbending, breaking into song only when she has irrefutable proof that he is her man. But they now share the language of love with touching, life-affirming unanimity.

\*I am grateful to James Halliday and Paolo Zanzu for their help in this regard,

\*\*I am grateful to the following colleagues for their valuable improvised contributions – Paolo Zanzu, Antonio Greco, Kati Debretzeni, Rachel Beckett, Jamie Savan and James Halliday.

## ‘A mortal thing am I’

Tim Carter

Claudio Monteverdi may have felt some resonance with the opening line of the prologue to *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria* (1640), delivered by the allegorical character, L’humana fragilità (Human Frailty). At the age of 73 he was taking the extraordinary step of returning to the operatic stage. His long history of writing music for the theatre had begun while he was employed as a musician at the court of Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua. There he had been involved in all the major theatrical genres of the late Renaissance, including plays with *intermedi*, sung and danced *balli* and a new Florentine invention: the *favola in musica* – or what we now call opera. For the last, his *L’Orfeo* (1607) is a wholly remarkable work and the earliest example of the genre that has a place in the repertory. He followed it with *Arianna* (1608), which attracted huge attention at its time, but the music is now lost apart from its famous lament for Arianna.

Monteverdi’s move to Venice in 1613 necessarily forced him to focus more on music for the church and for civic ceremonial in his capacity as choirmaster of St Mark’s Basilica. But he continued to write secular and even theatrical music in response to commissions from Mantua and other north Italian courts (including Parma), as well as from Venetian noblemen closer to home, and in the 1630s he forged connections with the Habsburgs in Vienna. No-one can have expected him to return to writing full-length operas so late in his career, however. Why he did so, and how he managed to accommodate himself to new and rapidly changing musical styles, are questions that demand some exploration.

## Opera in Venice

During the first third of the 17th century, opera had only a sporadic history in the north Italian courts and in Rome. Operas were essentially occasional pieces designed for single performances to celebrate special events. Nor were they always popular, given that courtly audiences did not have a great desire to sit for long periods passively observing the playing out of a musical drama on the stage. The number of operas produced was small – and the number that were repeated was smaller still – so it is hard to speak of a continuous tradition.

In 1637 the Teatro San Cassiano in Venice opened its doors as an opera house for a paying public. The initiative seems to have come from two musician-poets, Benedetto Ferrari and Francesco Manelli, who formed a troupe on the model of the players of the *commedia dell'arte* who were a regular fixture in Venetian theatres and elsewhere. For some reason, the idea took off: five new operas appeared in the next three seasons and three other opera houses had opened up in the city by 1641. By the end of the 1646/47 season, some 33 new works and six revivals had been staged there.

The new public opera was clearly a commercial success. Venice had a ready-made market not just from its citizens but also from the tourists who then (as now) travelled to the city to enjoy its architectural and artistic delights – and also its sensual pleasures. When the English visitor Thomas Coryate visited Venice in 1608 he drew particular attention to the music that could be

heard there in churches, on the streets and by way of the delicate hands and warbling throats of seductive courtesans. The fact that the opera season essentially ran through Carnival (officially, from the day after Christmas to the start of Lent) tended to accentuate its libidinous pleasures derived from its subject matter and also from its performers.

The resulting opera industry in Venice depended on complex interactions between theatre owners, impresarios and independent entrepreneurs: poets, composers, singers, instrumentalists, dancing-masters, stage designers, costume manufacturers – and so on and so forth down the line. Presumably there was money to be made in the venture, even if success depended on a gamble that could be won or lost. We do not know whether Monteverdi saw any profit in the enterprise. But as the most distinguished musician in Venice at the time, he was clearly enlisted to serve the cause.

## Monteverdi (re)takes the stage

Monteverdi moved cautiously, staying in the wings in the first three seasons of public opera in Venice. For Carnival 1640–41 he also in effect played two theatres against each other, reviving his *Arianna* at the Teatro San Moisè and producing a new opera, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, probably at the Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo. It is hard to imagine what Venetian audiences might have made of *Arianna*, by now over 30 years old (we do not know whether Monteverdi revised any of its music, though the text

did not change much). As for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, the impetus appears to have come from its librettist, the Venetian nobleman Giacomo Badoaro, who claimed in an open letter to the composer that he wanted to tempt him out of retirement so that Venetian audiences could understand how real emotions might be represented on the musical stage, rather than the faded imitations produced by other contemporary composers.

Monteverdi rose to the challenge, and with significant success, it seems: *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* was performed at least ten times during its first season, then taken on tour to Bologna by Ferrari and Manelli, then revived in Venice the next year. For the 1641/42 season Monteverdi also composed *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (the music is now lost), and for 1642/43 the wholly astonishing *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

As is typical for Venetian opera, the surviving sources for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* are somewhat problematic. Some librettos divide the opera into five acts rather than three, and a version survives with a different prologue (for which we have no music). The single musical score that we have was copied probably in the 1650s, and it somehow reached Vienna (where it now survives) a couple of decades later. Some music is missing (for example a *ballo* in Act 2 as the suitors woo Penelope) and might plausibly be borrowed from other sources.

### Greece, Rome... Venice

*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* is based on Homer's

*Odyssey* (XIII–XXIII), *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* on Virgil's *Aeneid*, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* mostly on the Roman historian Tacitus. These sources somewhat stand apart from other Venetian operas of the period that draw on classical myth, Renaissance epic (Ariosto and Tasso) or pastoral. But while myth, epic and pastoral are always open to symbolic and allegorical interpretation – which is their point – Monteverdi and his librettists seem to play closer to home.

The issue appears to hinge on the involvement of the Venetian *Accademia degli Incogniti*, a libertine group of Venetian noblemen who were also fiercely republican in their political orientation (as was Venice itself). As we find in other *Incogniti*-derived operas from the period, the representation on stage of good Greeks, good or bad (depending on your point of view) Trojans and bad Romans clearly had strong political resonances, not least given modern Venice's own deeply problematic relationship with Rome and the Papacy. In the case of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* the descent of Penelope's 'court' into the depravities of unwelcome suitors and their parasites carries a strong message: our hero, Ulysses, requires only a modicum of divine intervention in order to restore order to so corrupt a political world.

### Musical morals

Opera was almost by definition, and in almost any period, likely to be morally suspect – not just because of its subject matter but also because of its use of music. The genre's supporters claim



that music penetrates dramatic situations and emotional and psychological depths unavailable to mere speech. Its detractors – if they do not simply dismiss opera on the grounds of its lack of verisimilitude – claim that this defence is pure tosh: opera is frivolous and hinges solely on a vapid display of vocal virtuosity.

Early court opera had established principles whereby characters would deliver their lines in a declamatory style (which we now call recitative), responsive more to the demands of the text than to music *per se*. This declamatory style could then shift into more lyrical, songlike moments at specific points in the action, either where an actual song might be justified on stage (such as Orpheus' singing to the powers of Hades) or where one could be inserted by virtue of convention (for example an end-of-act chorus). The distinction was clear in musical terms, and also in poetic ones: texts for 'songs' – we might start to call them 'arias' – would be in regular stanzas, metre and rhyme.

Public opera forced a shift in priorities – who wants to pay to hear an opera containing just sung speech? – and therefore brought to the surface opera's fundamental dilemma: why should people sing? Of course, singing is not inappropriate for certain types of character – gods, shepherds, serving maids – or situations (seduction, incantation, sleep scenes and so on), and any sensible opera libretto would introduce such excuses for song at every available opportunity. The pattern is clear in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, not least in the handling of the shepherd Eumete, the lower-class lovers Melanto and Eurimaco and

the deities, including the highly virtuoso writing for Minerva and Giunone. Befitting his station, Ulisse tends to adopt a more restrained musical language – even at his joyful reunion with his son Telemaco – though he is not averse to singing when the moment seems right. As for the suitors and the parasite Iro, their penchant for song, rather than sung speech, tends to identify them as somewhat less than noble in terms of character and actions.

### Envoicing Penelope

Penelope, however, is clearly problematic. On the one hand, Venetian audiences prized female singers and their seductive voices. On the other, a noble female character who 'sings' too readily, and too tunefully, will necessarily enter dangerous terrain: can we trust her virtue or does it come too easy? We first encounter Penelope right at the beginning of Act 1, bemoaning Ulysses' absence in ways typical of a lamenting woman, with clear echoes of the *Lamento d'Arianna*, the only music to survive from Monteverdi's 1608 opera (revived, as we have seen, in Venice). While her recitative plaint is musically eloquent, she has little to sing about.

As the opera progresses, Penelope's servants, and then her suitors, in effect besiege her with song, surrounding her with the seductive triple-time arias that were becoming so prevalent in Venetian opera. She sternly resists at every turn; indeed, her musical language becomes increasingly arid as she descends into emotional paralysis. Only towards the end of Act 3, as she starts to believe that the stranger in front of her is indeed her long-

lost husband, does she start to regain her voice and then allow it to bloom in a glorious moment of release that is all the more powerful precisely because Penelope has 'sung' so little up to this point. She can love – and therefore sing – again, and few will condemn her for it.

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# Die Heimkehr des Odysseus

John Eliot Gardiner

Diese Einspielung von *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* entstand im September 2017 in Breslau als Höhepunkt einer siebenmonatigen Entdeckungsfahrt durch Monteverdis drei noch erhaltene Opern. Anlässlich seines 450. Geburtstags stellten wir für 33 Aufführungen in acht europäischen Ländern eine gut eingespielte Truppe aus Sängern und Instrumentalisten zusammen und beschlossen den Zyklus in Chicago und New York. Monteverdi wäre wohl ganz schön erstaunt gewesen, hätte er erfahren, dass es seinen mittlerweile berühmten Opern gelingt, 374 Jahre nach seinem Tod schätzungsweise siebzigtausend Zuhörer anzulocken (und darin sind noch keine der anderen Aufführungen im Rest der Welt im Jubiläumsjahr 2017 mitgezählt!). Wurde seine Musik noch vor fünfzig Jahren kaum eines Blickes gewürdigt, werden seine Opern heute relativ häufig inszeniert, auch wenn lediglich *L'incoronazione di Poppea* es in den Mainstream-Opernkanon geschafft hat. Paradoxerweise können wir nicht mal bei den drei erhaltenen Stücken davon ausgehen, hier den Gipfel seines Schaffens vor uns zu haben, da über die Jahrhunderte so viel verloren ging. Wenn man Zeitzeugen glaubt, müssen wohl seine *Arianna* (1608) und *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (1641) als schmerzlichste Verluste gelten. Nichtsdestotrotz sind aber auch jene Werke, die überdauert haben, von fesselnder Dramatik, wahrhaftiger Menschlichkeit und umwerfend schöner Musik geprägt.

Was veranlasste Monteverdi wohl, in seinem 74. Lebensjahr aus dem Opern-Ruhestand zu treten und – in einem letzten, großen Kreativitätsschub – das neue Genre noch einmal so fruchtbar zu bereichern?

Immerhin hatte er gerade die Priesterweihe empfangen; als vielbeschäftigtem *Maestro di Cappella di San Marco* blieb ihm wenig Freiraum zum einträglichen Nebenerwerb. Konnte er vielleicht nicht widerstehen, als sich die Möglichkeit bot, sein künstlerisches Glaubensbekenntnis einem breiteren – und zudem zahlenden – Publikum zu verkünden? Monteverdi war der Ansicht, dass Musik erst auf der Bühne ihre größtmögliche Wirkung entfalten und vor allem durch den zeitlichen und räumlichen Rahmen die „Gefühle bewegen“ könne, wie er es selbst ausdrückte [„*muovere gli affetti*“]. Und hier kommt Giacomo Badoaro ins Spiel. Der Librettist des *Ulisse* war führendes Mitglied der venezianischen *Accademia degli Incogniti*, welche bekanntermaßen gar nicht begeistert war von der Qualität der Opern, die seit Eröffnung der Theater 1637 entstanden waren. Badoaro nahm sich in einem schmeichelnden Brief an Monteverdi selbst der Sache an „um die Tugend Eurer Ehren anzustacheln und dieser Stadt [Venedig] klarzumachen, dass, wenn es um Gefühlshitze geht, Ihr den großen Unterschied zwischen einer echten und einer gemalten Sonne ausmacht.“ Genügte das schon, Monteverdi in Versuchung zu führen? Oder lag dies an Homers Erzählung von Odysseus' Heimkehr nach Ithaka mit ihren zeitlosen Themen von Treue, Reue und Lust?

Seit ich 21 Jahre alt war, stand *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* ganz oben auf meinem Wunschzettel jener Werke, die ich einmal dirigieren wollte. Das Werk verkörperte für mich all den exotischen Reiz der italienischen Musik des frühen siebzehnten Jahrhunderts. Bei der erstmaligen Aufführung des *Ulisse* 2017 bestätigte sich mir dann auch, wie sehr er auf Augenhöhe mit

den berühmteren *Orfeo* und *Poppea* steht, doch ich glaube, dass er uns alle, die wir an der gesamten Monteverdi-Trilogie mitwirkten, am stärksten überzeugte und bewegte. Die Uraufführung des *Ulisse* war 1640 ein durchschlagender Erfolg: Nach mindestens zehn Aufführungen vor vollem Haus in Venedig folgten Gastspiele in Bologna und die Wiederaufnahme in Venedig im Folgejahr. Der Schlüssel zum damaligen wie heutigen Erfolg liegt darin, wie gewandt und geschmeidig Monteverdi die Dinge musikalisch angeht und erörtert, wie geschickt er den plötzlichen Stimmungsumschwüngen und Wendungen in Badoaros Textvorlage folgt und nahezu unmerklich gleitend zwischen deklamierenden und eher liedhaft-lyrischen Abschnitten wechselt. Im gleichen Atemzug schafft er starke Kontraste und ein dynamisches Wechselspiel zwischen den Figuren – zwischen Göttern und Helden ebenso wie den Vertretern der niederen Ständen, seien sie nun rechtschaffen oder zwielichtig. Innerhalb der übergreifenden musikalischen Anlage erzeugt er herzerreißende Spannung: Wie lang kann die untröstliche Penelope den drei Freiern und den geflüsterten Einwänden ihrer Zofe Melantho widerstehen? Monteverdi zeigt uns, dass die harte Schale des Leugnens, die sich Penelope zum Selbstschutz zugelegt hat, ihr den Blick darauf versperrt, dass der einzige, der Odysseus' Bogen spannen und ihr damit die Freier vom Hals schaffen kann, jener Mann ist, der vor ihr steht: ihr zurückgekehrter Gatte.

Aus Monteverdis eigener Hand ist keine Partitur des *Ulisse* erhalten. Lediglich eine Abschrift, die ein Jahrzehnt nach dem Tod des Komponisten

entstand, wurde 1881 in Wien entdeckt und steht seit 2006 im Faksimile zur Verfügung. Dieser Partiturabschrift fehlen die Instrumentalstimmen sowie einige Stellen in der Musik; zudem weicht sie in einer Reihe wesentlicher Punkte von den neun erhaltenen Librettoabschriften ab, von denen nur eine in Zusammenhang mit der Partitur entstanden zu sein scheint. Aus diesen können wir aber rückschließen, wo Monteverdi Badoaros Textvorlage beschnitt und umstellte, damit sich eine schlüssigere Dramaturgie ergibt. Baodaro räumte später taktvollerweise ein: „Nachdem ich die Oper nun zehnmal gesehen habe, kann ich ... mit Nachdruck bestätigen, dass mein Odysseus Euer Ehren mehr verdankt als der echte Odysseus der unsterblich reizenden Minerva.“ Ohne möglichen Bezug auf eine „letzte“ oder „originale“ Fassung des *Ulissee* sollte jeder Aufführende zuallererst die erhaltenen Quellen sichten, um offensichtliche Unstimmigkeiten und Kopistenfehler zu beseitigen.\* Monteverdis letzte beide Opern kristallisierten nicht als unveränderliche „Werke“ mit einem festen Text aus, sondern waren als stoffwechselnde Lebewesen ständigen Erweiterungen, Kürzungen, Transpositionen und Umarbeitungen unterworfen. Jeder Versuch, sie in der heutigen Zeit wiederzubeleben, muss sich unweigerlich eine neue Lösung einfallen lassen.

Als es darum ging, die Lücken in der Wiener Partiturabschrift zu schließen, an denen keine Musik überliefert ist, schien auf der Hand zu liegen, sich eher bei Monteverdis eigenen Stücken aus früheren Schaffensperioden zu bedienen als in zeitlich näherer Musik seiner Schüler oder Komponistenkollegen zu suchen. Denn trotz der

klaren Unterschiede in Form und Tonsprache und trotz der 33 Jahre, die zwischen *Ulissee* und seiner ersten Oper *L'Orfeo* liegen, ist die Spurenlage eindeutig; Monteverdi hält in beiden Stücken an seinen Idealen der Textvertonung fest: Nachahmen („imitare“) und Vertreten („rappresentare“). So konnten wir auch für den Chor der Najaden (1. Akt, 6. Szene), als sie Odysseus' Hab und Gut vom Ufer retten, ein dreistimmiges *balletto* finden, das wie angegossen passt: *„De la bellezza le dovute lodi“* aus seinen *Scherzi musicali* (1607). Für den *ballo greco* im zweiten Akt (6. Szene) – hier steigern die Freier ihr Werbebemühen um Penelope noch einmal – bedienten wir uns an drei Stellen in Monteverdis Chorballett *Tirsi e Clori* von 1615 (vermutlich sein erstes Stück mit theatralischen Elementen, das in Venedig entstand; vier Jahre später wurde es in seinem 7. Madrigalbuch veröffentlicht). Und schließlich konnten wir auch noch kurze, gequält nagende *entracte* aus seinem *Ballo delle ingrate* (entstanden 1608, aber erst zwei Jahre vor Uraufführung des *Ulissee* veröffentlicht) unterbringen: während die Freier im stummen Spiel beim Spannen von Odysseus' Bogen scheitern (2. Akt, 12. Szene) und als launisches Fragment zur Ankündigung von Eurykleias Auftritt im dritten Akt (8. Szene).

Alle übrigen Entscheidungen bezüglich Aufführungsmaterial und -praxis erwuchsen aus unserem ursprünglichen Vorsatz, die Trilogie nicht in Proszeniumstheatern mit aufwändiger Bühnentechnik, Bühnenbild und Requisiten aufzuführen, sondern in Konzertsälen (außer im *Teatro La Fenice* in Venedig, auf dessen vorgeschobener Bühnenrampe wir zwei volle



Zyklen aufführten). Wir wollten nicht nur die Opernfans erreichen, sondern zielten weiter auf ein breiteres und jüngerer Monteverdi-Publikum. Indem wir seine Trilogie abgespeckt, dafür aber umso lebendiger inszenierten, wollten wir die tiefgreifende und explosive Kraft dieser großartigen Musikdramen vermitteln, die emotionale Tiefe, die sie ausloten, und zeigen, warum sie sich so verblüffend modern „anfühlen“, ohne dabei jedoch jene Innigkeit zu opfern, die hier Form und Gedankenführung innewohnt. Wir wissen (diesmal durch Michelangelo Torcigliani, einen weiteren seiner Librettisten), dass Monteverdi stets nach Libretti mit Stimmungswechseln Ausschau hielt, „denn diese ermöglichen ihm, mit der ganzen Bandbreite des Pathos zu zeigen, was in seiner Kunst steckt, indem er die Noten so an den Worten und Gefühlen ausrichtet, das der Sänger lacht, weint, wütend und mitfühlend wird und überhaupt alles tut, um was man ihn bittet, während der Zuhörer derweil mit gleicher Wucht die Fülle und Kraft dieser Regungen erfährt.“

Einen Großteil der Probenzeit nutzten wir, Monteverdis geistreiche Verschmelzung von Text und Musik zu erkunden und sicherzustellen, dass alle, Sänger wie Instrumentalisten, völlig mit dem Text vertraut sind. Den Geboten von Marco da Gagliano, ebenfalls Opernkomponist, folgend, bemühten wir uns, „die Silben wie ein Steinmetz zu modellieren, damit die Worte gut zu verstehen sind“ und – bei linguistisch einwandfreier Aussprache und Tonfall – sie sinnlich auszukosten. Unser Sprachcoach Matteo Dalle Fratte strengte sich sehr an, der Besetzung die faszinierende Schönheit des

gesungenen Italienisch nahezubringen – mit seinen perkussiv und ausdrucksstark herausgeschleuderten Konsonanten als Kontrapunkt zum sanft fließenden Legato der Vokale. Und da denke man nicht nur an Doppelkonsonanten, sondern auch an Kommasetzung, agogische Betonungen, Wortwiederholungen und Ausrufe! Erst wenn die Sängerdarsteller diese Technik wirklich aus dem Effeff beherrschen (und nicht, wie das die Krankheit vieler Opernsänger ist, ins grässliche „*singerese*“ verfallen – so nennen wir es im Englischen, wenn jemand seine heimischen Aussprachemuster der gesungene Sprache überstülpt), nur dann also können sie jenen Gänsehauteffekt beim Zuhörer erzeugen, wenn dieser die Worte vernimmt. Und außerdem kommt dies der Ausdrucksvielfalt in Monteverdis Textvertonung zugute sowie seiner geschickten Art, Sprachbetonungen nachzuahmen. Indem man einen nahenden Konsonanten leicht vorwegnimmt und den folgenden Vokal um eine Winzigkeit verzögert, spiegelt man den Gedankengang der Erzählung. Das ist für mich vergleichbar mit der Art und Weise, wie Monteverdi Rhythmus und Stimmführung behandelt. In seinen Opern lässt Monteverdi das Metrum ständig zwischen geraden und ungeraden Takten über einem zugrundeliegenden *tactus* (einem regelmäßig durchgehenden Schlag) wechseln. Hier entsteht der rhythmische Nervenkitzel. Hinzu kommt die harmonische Spannung, die er zwischen den Gesangslinien und der Generalbassstütze aufbaut. Letztere schreitet üblicherweise in einem regelmäßigen harmonischen Rhythmus oder Puls voran, lässt jedoch an Schlüsselstellen



ausdrucksstarke Dissonanzen sprießen, wenn Monteverdi meint, dass beim Zusammenprall der beiden sich ergänzenden Stimmen die Funken fliegen sollen.

Stellen Sie sich vor, wie ich mich damals freute, als ich herausfand, dass Sir Peter Hall, der mittlerweile verstorbene Bühnenregisseur, auf eine erstaunlich ähnliche Technik hinwies, die Shakespeare in seinen großen Tragödien und späten Stücken einsetzte, welche genau zu jener Zeit entstanden, als Monteverdi sich anschickte, Opernkomponist zu werden. Hall meint jene „absolut wunderbare Freiheit der Versdichtung. [In *Das Wintermärchen/The Winter's Tale*] drücken sich Leontes' verworrene Gefühle und sein Verfolgungswahn treffsicher in seinen klumpig-regelwidrigen Rhythmen und Fehlbetonungen aus. Doch diese Abweichungen von der Regel können erst dann emotionalen Sinn ergeben und das Publikum berühren, wenn dem Schauspieler klar ist, welche Regelhaftigkeit ihnen eigentlich unterliegt. Er muss in Kreuzrhythmen schwelgen, auf Regelwidrigkeiten herumreiten und die Unebenheiten in der glatten Oberfläche für seine Gemütszwecke nutzen.“ So weit, so eigentümlich vertraut. Hall verglich das Darbieten der reifen Shakespeare'schen Dichtung mit den Herausforderungen, die sich einem guten Jazzspieler stellen – auch wenn das, wie ich finde, genauso für Sänger oder Continuospieler gilt, die den Notentext von Monteverdis Opern zu Musik machen: „Man muss im Takt bleiben, den Rhythmus immer spüren. Es ist jedoch die Spannung zwischen dieser Regelhaftigkeit und Unregelmäßigkeiten in der Sprache [oder

bei Monteverdi zwischen Gesangslinie und Generalbass], welche den Gefühlsaufruhr ausdrückt. Je stärker die Verse drohen zusammenzubrechen, desto gequälter und gefühlsbetonter wird der Ausdruck. Wirklich einstürzen dürfen sie jedoch nie, wie auch der Jazzmusiker keinen Schlag verpassen oder ‚rausfliegen‘ darf. Der Darsteller muss das Risiko des rhythmischen Zerfalls eingehen, sich ihm aber nicht hingeben. Was beim Publikum ankommt, ist so immer unerwartet, gewagt und unvorhersehbar“ [*Exposed by the Mask*]. John Berger drückt es ähnlich aus: „Die Art, wie Sänger mit der Linearität der Zeit spielen und ihr trotzen, hat etwas davon, wie Akrobaten und Jongleure mit der Schwerkraft umgehen ... Das Tempo, der Takt, die Wiederholungen, die Loops eines Liedes bilden einen Schutz vor der linear verlaufenden Zeit: eine Zuflucht, wo Zukunft, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart sich trösten, provozieren, begeistern oder in eine ironische Distanz zueinander rücken können.“ (*Ein Geschenk für Rosa*, übers. von Hans Jürgen Balmes)

Im *Ulisse* können wir hören, wie Monteverdis gekonnte Übergänge zwischen normaler „gesungener Sprache“ (Rezitativ), reinem Gesang (Arie) und einer Mischung aus beiden (Arioso) dazu dienen, Wesen und Gemütszustand der Figuren klarer herauszuarbeiten. In der Praxis muss sich jeder Aufführende ständig des Gedankengangs und dessen Entwicklungsrichtung bewusst sein und – angesichts von Monteverdis wichtiger Abgrenzung zwischen Vermitteln (*Diegesis*) und Nachahmen (*Mimesis*) – des Einflusses, den dies auf den Gang der Handlung sowie die emotionale Botschaft und den „Ton“ jedes Monologs oder Gesprächs hat. Hier

zu unterscheiden, war völlig neu für die damalige Entwicklung des Musiktheaters und entwickelte sich parallel zu jenen Methoden, die Shakespeare in seinem Spätwerk erprobte. Als Hamlet in der zweiten Szene des zweiten Aktes sagt „Jetzt bin ich allein. O welch ein Schurk’ und niedrer Sklav’ bin ich!“, ist er ja ganz offensichtlich nicht allein. Er wendet sich vielmehr an das lärmende Publikum im Globe Theatre. Entscheidend ist hier, wie nun der Anschein von Innigkeit erzeugt werden kann, wie man dieses rohe, höchstpersönliche Gefühl mit überwältigender Kraft offenlegt, aber ohne zu forcieren.

Für unsere Aufführungen entschieden wir uns, wieder Marco da Gaglianos Anweisungen zu folgen statt die Instrumentalisten in den Orchestergraben zu verbannen: „Es sei zuallererst empfohlen, dass die Instrumente, die die Solosänger begleiten müssen, so aufgestellt werden, dass sie den Darstellern ins Gesicht sehen, damit sie durch das bessere gegenseitige Wahrnehmen gemeinsam fortschreiten“. Das bietet zwei weitere Vorteile: Das Publikum hat so den „Maschinenraum“ des Geschehens voll im Blick; mit den Instrumentalisten symmetrisch auf zwei Halbkreise verteilt kann es das Zusammenspiel aller Beteiligten an jeder Stelle verfolgen. Und da wir in mittelgroßen bis großen Konzertsälen auftraten und so nicht durch das karge und enge *instrumentarium* der gewinnorientierten venezianischen Theater der 1640er Jahre beschränkt waren, entschlossen wir uns, die Continuogruppe um eine Lira da Gamba, eine Harfe sowie je zwei Blockflöten und Zinken zu verstärken, ohne dadurch die Intimität der Dialoge oder die Wortwiedergabe

zu beeinträchtigen. Ebenso unterfütterten wir jene Stellen, an denen Monteverdi in seinem „erregten Stil“ (*stile concitato*) in diesen typisch kriegesischen Ton verfällt, mit kräftigen Streicherstößen, um so Verachtung, Zorn oder Kampfeslust zu vermitteln. Entsprechend verfährt er auch in seinen *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (1638) und schreibt es vor für Odysseus’ Ringkampf mit Iro oder die *sinfonia da guerra*, die den zweiten Akt beschließt. An anderen Stellen fügten wir immer mal wieder improvisierte Stimmen ein, um den Unterschied zwischen Göttern und Menschen herauszustellen oder zwischen der harmlosen Hirtenwelt und der beklemmenden Hofgesellschaft um Penelope.\*\*

Diese Gegenüberstellung zweier gegensätzlicher Welten ähnelt auf verblüffende Weise jener in Shakespeares *Wie es euch gefällt*; dort steht der Wald für die Freiheit, ungekünstelte Güte und ein Leben im Einklang mit der Natur, während der Hof mit all seinen Schmeichlern und Heuchlern für alles Verdorbene und Trügerische steht. Können wir Monteverdis *Ulisse* also eine Art Shakespear’scher „Anti-Komödie“ betrachten? Schließlich gipfelt das Stück nach Irren und Wirren, nach Verwechseln und Enträtseln in der Heimkehr ins Ehebett, wo nun zu guter Letzt die natürliche Ordnung der Dinge wiederhergestellt ist. Keine andere Handlung jener Zeit nimmt einen solchen Verlauf – außer Shakespeares Tragikomödien. Doch die Gemeinsamkeiten mit dem großen „Barden“ reichen noch wesentlich weiter. Bei seiner Darstellung des Odysseus (und mehr noch der Penelope) sorgt sich Monteverdi sehr um die Innenwelt, ganz wie Shakespeare in

*Hamlet* und *King Lear*. Dramatiker und Komponist: Beide untersuchen sie vielschichtiges Denken und Fühlen, das über Worte und Taten hinausreicht.

*Il ritorno d'Ulisse*, Monteverdis vorvorletzte Oper, ist ein weiterer Schritt in einem Leben, das Musik veränderte: vom geschickten Kunstgriff, die Sphärenharmonie nachzuzeichnen, zu einer dramatisierten Ausdrucksform, die in menschlichen Wahrheiten und Gefühlen wurzelt. Dies lief auf einen grundsätzlichen Richtungswechsel hinaus: von einer Musiksprache, die sich vorrangig in metaphysischen Bekräftigungen äußerte, hin zu einer, die eine ganze Welt des Elends, der Verdorbenheit, doch auch der erlösenden Liebe widerspiegeln kann. Und es fällt genau zusammen mit einer jener wilden Zeiten in der Geschichte der Malerei, als Künstler wie Velázquez, Rembrandt oder Artemesia Gentileschi auf der Höhe ihrer Kraft ihrer Kunst freien Lauf ließen und sich ähnlich ungebunden über heilige Bräuche hinwegsetzten.

Gibt es auch nur eine andere Oper, die ihren Höhepunkt in einem Duett der beiden Hauptfiguren findet, die hier erstmals gemeinsam singen? Sie haben sich seit zwanzig Jahren nicht gesprochen. Er war als vermisst gemeldet und kehrt nun heim. Sie blieb derweil unerschütterlich treu, und es bricht erst dann mit Gesang aus ihr heraus, als zwingend klar wird, dass dies ihr Gatte ist. Doch jetzt teilen sie die Sprache der Liebe in bewegender, lebensbejahender Eintracht.

\* In diesem Zusammenhang danke ich James Halliday und Paolo Zanzu für ihre Hilfe.

\*\* Für ihre wertvolle Stegreifunterstützung danke ich Paolo Zanzu, Antonio Greco, Kati Debretzeni, Rachel Beckett, Jamie Savan und James Halliday.

## „Sterblich bin ich“

Tim Carter

Claudio Monteverdi empfand vielleicht eine gewisse Resonanzerfahrung mit diesem Eröffnungsvers des Prologs zu *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1640), dort vorgetragen von der allegorischen Figur der menschlichen Gebrechlichkeit (*L'humana fragilità*). Mit 73 Jahren unternahm er den bemerkenswerten Schritt zurück auf die Opernbühne. Sein langes Schaffen des Komponierens für die Bühne hatte einst begonnen, als er noch als Musiker am Hof des Herzogs Vincenzo Gonzaga in Mantua angestellt war. Dort war er an allen großen Bühnengattungen der Spätrenaissance beteiligt, darunter Stücke mit eingebauten *intermedi*, gesungenen und getanzten *balli* und einer neuen Florentiner Erfindung: der *favola in musica* – heute nennen wir es Oper. Für letztere ist sein *L'Orfeo* von 1607, ein rundum bemerkenswertes Werk, das früheste Beispiel der Gattung, das einen Platz im Repertoire fand. Ihm ließ er 1608 seine *Arianna* folgen, welche seinerzeit großes Aufsehen erregte, deren Musik jedoch verloren ging – mit Ausnahme des berühmten Lamento der Arianna.

Monteverdis Umzug nach Venedig zwang ihn 1613 notwendigerweise, in seiner Rolle als Kapellmeister des Markusdoms sein Augenmerk verstärkt auf Kirchenmusik und bürgerliche Festmusiken zu richten. Er schrieb aber weiterhin auch weltliche Werke, sogar für die Bühne, und zwar als Reaktion auf Aufträge aus Mantua und von anderen norditalienischen Höfen (u. a. Parma) sowie aus unmittelbarer Nähe von venezianischen Adligen; und in den 1630er Jahren knüpfte er Verbindungen mit den Habsburgern in Wien. Niemand hätte jedoch damit gerechnet, dass er so

spät in seiner Karriere noch einmal zum Schreiben abendfüllender Opern zurückfindet. Warum er es tat und wie es ihm dabei gelang, sich neuen und rasch wandelnden Musikstilen anzupassen, sind Fragen, die einiger Erörterung bedürfen.

### Oper in Venedig

Im ersten Drittel des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts blickt die Oper nur auf eine vereinzelte Entwicklungsgeschichte an den norditalienischen Höfen und in Rom zurück. Opern waren im Grunde Gelegenheitswerke für einzelne Aufführungen oder besondere Festivitäten. Sie waren auch nicht immer sonderlich populär, da das Hofpublikum keinen großen Wert darauf legte, für lange Strecken untätig sitzen zu bleiben und zuzuschauen, wie sich ein Musikdrama auf der Bühne entfaltet. Es entstand nur eine geringe Anzahl an Opern – und die Anzahl der Wiederaufnahmen war noch geringer –; man kann also kaum von einer ungebrochenen Tradition sprechen.

1637 öffnete das Teatro San Cassiano dem zahlenden Publikum in Venedig seine Türen. Diese Initiative scheint auf zwei dichtende Musiker zurückzugehen, Benedetto Ferrari und Francesco Manelli, die eine Truppe nach dem Vorbild der Darsteller in der *Commedia dell'arte* bildeten, welche zum regelmäßigen Inventar der Theater in Venedig und andernorts gehörte. Aus irgendeinem Grund zündete die Idee: Fünf neue Opern erschienen in den folgenden drei Spielzeiten, und bis 1641 wurden drei weitere Opernhäuser in der Stadt in Betrieb genommen. Bis zum Ende der

Spielzeit 1646/47 kamen 33 neue Werke und sechs Wiederaufnahmen auf die dortigen Bühnen.

Die neue öffentliche Oper war ganz klar ein kommerzieller Erfolg. Venedig war ein gemachtes Feld, nicht nur durch das Publikum seiner eigenen Bürger, sondern auch durch die Touristen, die damals wie heute die Stadt aufsuchten, um ihre künstlerischen und architektonischen Freuden zu genießen – sowie ihre sinnlichen. Als der Engländer Thomas Coryate 1608 Venedig besuchte, lenkte er seine Aufmerksamkeit vor allem auf die Musik, die man dort in den Kirchen und Straßen sowie aus feinfühligem Händen und trillernden Kehlen verführerischer Freudenmädchen hören konnte. Da sich eine Opernspielzeit praktisch mit der Karnevalszeit deckte (offiziell vom Tag nach Weihnachten bis zum Beginn der Fastenzeit), neigte man dazu, die lustbetonten Freuden zu betonen, welche man auf ihre Thematik und auch ihre Darsteller zurückführte.

Das so entstandene Operngewerbe in Venedig beruhte auf einem komplexen Wechselspiel zwischen Theaterbesitzern, Impresarios sowie „selbstständigen“ Dichtern, Komponisten, Sängern, Instrumentalisten, Tanzmeistern, Bühnen- und Kostümbildnern und so weiter und so fort. Man konnte wohl hoffen, Geld in diesem Unternehmen zu machen, auch wenn der Erfolg auf einem Glücksspiel beruhte, das man gewinnen oder verlieren konnte. Man weiß nicht, ob Monteverdi glaubte, aus diesem Vorhaben Profit schlagen zu können. Aber als angesehenster Musiker Venedigs zu der Zeit konnte er sich der Sache nicht entziehen.

## Monteverdi steht (wieder) im Bühnenmittelpunkt

Monteverdi ging vorsichtig vor, wartete in den ersten drei Spielzeiten der öffentlichen Oper in Venedig noch auf seine Chance. Für die Karnevalszeit 1640–41 spielte er sogar zwei Theater gegeneinander aus, indem er am Teatro San Moisè seine *Arianna* wiederaufnahm und eine neue Oper, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, wahrscheinlich am Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo aufführte. Man kann sich nur schwer vorstellen, wie Arianna, nun mehr als dreißig Jahre alt, auf das venezianische Publikum wirkte. (Es ist nicht bekannt, ob Monteverdi die Musik irgendwie überarbeitet hat; der Text hat sich jedenfalls kaum geändert.) Was *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* betrifft, so scheint der Anstoß von seinem Librettisten, dem venezianischen Adligen Giacomo Badoaro, gekommen zu sein, welcher in einem offenen Brief an den Komponisten gestand, dass er diesen aus dem Ruhestand locken wollte, damit Venedigs Publikum verstünde, wie wahre Gefühle musikalisch auf der Bühne dargestellt werden – im Gegensatz zu den blassen Nachahmereien seitens zeitgenössischer Komponisten.

Monteverdi stellte sich der Herausforderung – wohl mit bedeutendem Erfolg: *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* wurde in seiner ersten Spielzeit mindestens zehnmal aufgeführt, anschließend unter Ferrari und Manelli zum Gastspiel nach Bologna gebracht und im Folgejahr in Venedig wiederaufgenommen. Für die Spielzeit 1641/42 schrieb Monteverdi auch *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (deren Musik nicht erhalten ist) und für 1642/43 die ganz und gar

erstaunliche *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

Wie es für venezianische Oper typisch ist, stellen uns die überlieferten Quellen von *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* vor gewisse Probleme. Manche Libretti unterteilen die Oper statt in drei in fünf Akte, und es ist eine Fassung mit abweichendem Prolog erhalten, zu dem keine Musik überliefert ist. Der einzige erhaltene Notentext ist eine Partiturabschrift, wohl aus den 1650er Jahren, die es einige Jahrzehnte später irgendwie nach Wien schaffte (wo sie bis jetzt überlebt hat). An manchen Stellen fehlt die Musik (zum Beispiel ein *ballo* im zweiten Akt, als die Freier Penelope umwerben); es ist durchaus vorstellbar, dass sie hier aus anderen Quellen entlehnt wurde.

## Griechenland, Rom ... Venedig

*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* basiert auf Homers Odyssee (13. bis 23. Gesang), *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* auf Vergils *Aeneis*, und *L'incoronazione di Poppea* weitestgehend auf der römischen Geschichtsschreibung von Tacitus. Diese Quellen stehen etwas im Abseits anderer venezianischer Opern jener Zeit, die sich eher bei klassischen Mythen, Renaissance-Epen (Ariost oder Tasso) oder Hirtendichtung bedienen. Weil jedoch Mythos, Epos und Pastorales immer für symbolische und allegorische Deutung offen sind – genau darum geht es ihnen ja –, scheinen Monteverdi und seine Librettisten in der eigenen Spielhälfte bleiben zu wollen.

Das hängt wohl auch mit der Einflussnahme von Venedigs *Accademia degli Incogniti* zusammen,

einer freigeistigen Gruppe venezianischer Adliger, die in ihrer politischen Ausrichtung für das Republikanische brannten (wie ja auch Venedig selbst). Wie wir es ebenfalls in anderen der von den *Incogniti* beeinflussten Opern jener Zeit sehen, klang in der Darstellung guter Griechen, (je nach persönlichem Standpunkt) guter oder böser Troer und böser Römer auf der Bühne klar Politisches an, nicht zuletzt aufgrund der zutiefst problematischen Beziehungen zwischen dem modernen Venedig und Rom mit seinem Papsttum. Im Fall von *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* ist die Botschaft vom verderblichen Niedergang von Penelopes „Hof“ mit seinen unliebsamen Verehrern und deren Nutznießern klar: Unserem Helden Odysseus reicht ein Mindestmaß göttlicher Einmischung, um die Ordnung in dieser so verdorbenen politischen Welt wiederherzustellen.

### Moral in der Musik

Oper schien nahezu per definitionem und fast zu jeder Zeit moralisch fragwürdig, nicht nur wegen ihrer Themen, sondern auch wegen ihres Musikgebrauchs. Fürsprecher der Gattung behaupten, Musik könne dramatische Momente sowie emotionale und psychologische Tiefen ausloten, die der bloßen Sprache unzugänglich bleiben. Ihre Gegner – wenn sie die Oper nicht bereits aufgrund ihrer fehlenden Wirklichkeitsnähe abtun – behaupten, diese Begründung sei reiner Blödsinn: Oper sei albern und basiere einzig und allein auf dem nichtssagenden Zurschaustellen stimmlicher Virtuosität.

Die frühe Hofoper hatte Grundregeln formuliert, nach denen die Rollen ihre Verse in einem deklamatorischen Stil vortragen (heute nennen wir dies Rezitativ), der eher den Anforderungen des Textes als der Musik *an sich* folgt. Dieser deklamatorische Stil konnte sodann an bestimmten Momenten der Handlung ins Lyrische, Liedhafte wechseln, wenn entweder ein echtes Lied auf der Bühne gerechtfertigt schien (wie Orpheus' Gesang vor den Mächten der Unterwelt) oder etwas Vergleichbares kraft Tradition eingefügt werden konnte (beispielsweise ein Schlusschor am Aktende). In musikalischem und dichterischem Sinn war der Unterschied klar: Der Text von „Gesängen“ – langsam können wir sie „Arien“ nennen – hätte regelmäßigen Strophenbau, Metrik und Reim.

Die öffentliche Oper erzwang einen Prioritätenwechsel – wer will schon viel Geld für eine Oper ausgeben, in der man nur gesungene Sprache hört? – und brachte so das grundlegende Dilemma der Oper ans Tageslicht: Warum sollte überhaupt irgendjemand singen? Bei bestimmten Figuren – Göttern, Hirten, Dienstmägden – ist liedartiger Gesang natürlich nicht unangebracht, ebenso zu bestimmten Situationen (Verführungs-, Verzauberungs- oder Schlafszenen etc.), und jedes gescheite Opernlibretto würde solche Ausreden zum Gesang bei jeder sich bietenden Gelegenheit einbauen. In *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* wird dieses Muster deutlich, nicht zuletzt beim Umgang mit dem Hirten Eumaios (Eumete), dem „kleinbürgerlichen“ Liebespärchen Melantho (Melanto) und Eurymachos (Eurimaco) sowie den Gottheiten, einschließlich der hochvirtuosen



Stellen für Minerva und Juno (Giunone). Passend zu seinem Stand neigt Odysseus eher zu einer verhalteneren Tonsprache – sogar beim freudigen Wiedersehen mit seinem Sohn Telemach (Telemaco) –, wenn er auch dem Singen gegenüber nicht abgeneigt ist, sobald der rechte Moment gekommen scheint. Was die Freier und den Schmarotzer Iro betrifft, so tendiert ihr Faible für Gesang (im Gegensatz zu gesungener Sprache) dazu, sie in bezug auf Wesenszüge und Handeln als weniger edel auszuzeichnen.

### Penelope eine Stimme geben

Penelope hingegen ist eindeutig ein Problemfall. Einerseits schätzte Venedigs Publikum Sängerinnen mit ihren verführerischen Stimmen. Andererseits wird eine edle weibliche Figur, die zu bereitwillig und klangvoll „singt“, notwendigerweise gefährliches Terrain betreten: Können wir darauf vertrauen, dass dies ehrlichen Können entspringt? Oder fällt es ihr zu leicht? Zuerst begegnet uns Penelope gleich zu Beginn des ersten Akts, als sie Odysseus' Fernbleiben ganz nach Art einer klagenden Frau betrauert, worin deutlich das *Lamento d'Arianna* nachklingt, das einzige Stück Musik, das aus der Oper von 1608 erhalten blieb (und wie gesagt in Venedig überarbeitet wurde). Ist ihr Klagerezitativ auch musikalisch beredt, so hat sie doch wenig, worüber sie singen kann.

Im Verlauf der Oper belagern Penelope tatsächlich zuerst ihre Diener, dann ihre Verehrer mit Gesang und umschmeicheln sie mit verlockenden Arien im Dreiertakt, wie sie in der

venezianischen Oper vorherrschten. Sie widersetzt sich jedes Mal schroff. Ihre Musiksprache wird in der Tat immerdürre, je weiter sie in Gefühlsstarre verfällt. Erst gegen Ende des dritten Akts, als sie allmählich glaubt, der Fremde vor ihr sei wirklich ihr lange verlorener Gatte, erlangt sie so langsam ihre Stimme wieder und lässt sie in einem wunderbaren Moment der Befreiung aufblühen, was umso stärker wirkt, gerade weil Penelope bis hierher so wenig „gesungen“ hat. Sie kann wieder lieben – und daher singen. Wer kann es ihr verdenken?

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## Le retour d'Ulysse dans sa patrie

John Eliot Gardiner

Cet enregistrement d'*Il ritorno d'Ulisse* a été réalisé à Wrocław en septembre 2017, à l'apogée de sept mois d'exploration des trois opéras de Monteverdi qui ont survécu. Pour marquer le 450<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de sa naissance, nous avons réuni un ensemble très soudé de chanteurs et d'instrumentistes et donné 33 représentations dans huit pays européens, avant de terminer notre cycle à Chicago et à New York. Monteverdi aurait certainement été abasourdi d'apprendre que la renommée dont jouissent encore ses opéras 374 ans après sa mort serait telle qu'ils toucheraient 70 000 auditeurs, selon les estimations (et cela avant de compter aucune des autres représentations commémoratives données dans différentes régions du monde en 2017 !). Mais alors qu'il y a cinquante ans seulement le public connaissait à peine sa musique, aujourd'hui les versions scéniques de ses opéras sont relativement fréquentes, bien que seul *L'incoronazione di Poppea* se soit jusqu'à présent imposé au répertoire des opéras canoniques. Paradoxalement, on ne peut même pas être sûr qu'avec ces trois survivants nous ayons ce qu'il composa de meilleur, tant d'œuvres s'étant perdues au fil des siècles. D'après ce que l'on disait à l'époque, les pertes les plus douloureuses seraient son *Arianna* (1608) et *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (1641). Pourtant, celles qui ont survécu sont toutes dramatiquement captivantes, humainement véridiques et d'une beauté musicale éblouissante.

Qu'est-ce qui persuada donc Monteverdi de sortir de sa retraite de compositeur d'opéras dans sa soixante-quatorzième année pour faire des

contributions aussi décisives au genre nouveau, dans une dernière grande explosion créatrice ? Après tout, il venait de recevoir les saints ordres, et, très occupé comme *maestro di cappella* de la basilique Saint-Marc, il n'avait que peu de temps libre pour se lancer aussi dans des entreprises commerciales. Ne pouvait-il laisser passer l'occasion de prêcher son crédo esthétique à un public payant et plus large ? Monteverdi croyait que la musique produit son plus grand effet quand elle est représentée sur scène, et que, lorsqu'elle est définie dans le temps et l'espace, elle est le plus à même de « mouvoir les passions humaines », comme il disait lui-même. C'est ici que Giacomo Badoaro entre en scène. Le librettiste d'*Ulysse* était un membre important de l'Accademia degli Incogniti vénitienne, dont on disait qu'elle n'était guère impressionnée par la qualité des opéras qu'on donnait depuis que les premiers théâtres avaient ouvert leurs portes en 1637. Badoaro prit sur lui d'adresser une lettre flatteuse à Monteverdi, « pour inciter les vertus de Votre Seigneurie à faire savoir au peuple de Venise que, s'agissant des émotions fortes, il y a une grande différence entre une image peinte du soleil et le soleil lui-même ». Fut-ce assez pour le tenter, ou est-ce l'histoire homérique du retour d'Ulysse à Ithaque, avec ses thèmes intemporels de la fidélité, du remords et de la passion, qui l'attira ?

*Il ritorno d'Ulysse* était en tête de la liste d'œuvres que je souhaitais diriger depuis l'âge de vingt et un ans. L'œuvre incarnait pour moi tout ce qu'il y avait de plus exotique et séduisant dans la musique

italienne du début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le fait de diriger *Ulysse* pour la première fois en 2017 a confirmé pour moi sa stature et en faisait le digne pendant des deux opéras plus célèbres, *Orfeo* et *Poppea* ; mais je crois que nous tous qui avons été mêlés à la trilogie complète de Monteverdi l'avons trouvé le plus convaincant et le plus émouvant des trois. Lors de sa création en 1640, *Ulysse* fut un succès retentissant : il fut donné au moins dix fois à Venise devant des salles combles avant d'être emmené en tournée à Bologne, puis repris à Venise l'année suivante. La clef de son succès aussi bien hier qu'aujourd'hui tient à la fluidité du discours musical de Monteverdi, à son habileté à s'ajuster aux inflexions et aux climats très changeants du livret de Badoaro, et à glisser presque imperceptiblement de la déclamation à des passages chantants plus lyriques. En même temps, il produit de forts contrastes et une interaction dynamique entre les personnages – dieux, héros et simples mortels (certains vertueux, d'autres vils). Au sein d'une structure musicale en arche, il crée un suspense qui prend au ventre – combien de temps l'inconsolable Pénélope tiendra-t-elle face aux trois prétendants et aux arguments murmurés par sa suivante Mélanto ? Monteverdi nous fait voir que la carapace de déni que Pénélope s'est formée pour se protéger l'empêche d'admettre que la seule personne capable de bander l'arc d'Ulysse et d'éloigner les prétendants est l'homme debout devant elle – son propre époux de retour.

Il ne subsiste pas de manuscrit autographe d'*Ulysse*. Une unique copie faite dix ans après la

mort du compositeur a été découverte en 1881 à Vienne et n'est disponible en fac-similé que depuis 2006. Cette partition, qui a des lignes instrumentales manquantes et quelques blancs dans la musique, se distingue aussi à un certain nombre d'égards significatifs des neuf livrets manuscrits qu'on connaît, dont un seul semble avoir été préparé en référence directe à la partition. Cela nous permet de voir les endroits où Monteverdi a choisi de couper et de réarranger le texte de Badoaro pour lui donner une plus grande cohérence dramatique. Badoaro reconnu par la suite avec beaucoup de tact que « ayant vu l'opéra représenté dix fois, je peux catégoriquement affirmer que mon Ulysse est plus obligé par Votre Seigneurie que le vrai Ulysse ne l'est par la toujours charmante Minerve ». Sans version « définitive » ou « authentique » d'*Ulisse* à laquelle se fier, la première priorité pour tout interprète est de réconcilier les sources qui subsistent et de corriger les évidentes divergences et erreurs du copiste \*. Les deux derniers opéras de Monteverdi ne se sont pas cristallisés en « œuvres » immuables avec un texte figé, mais, en tant qu'organismes vivants, ont été constamment soumis à des ajouts, coupures, transpositions et révisions. Toute tentative pour les ressusciter de nos jours proposera nécessairement une solution différente.

Lorsqu'il a fallu combler les lacunes musicales dans la partition de Vienne, il a semblé préférable de puiser à la musique de Monteverdi lui-même plutôt que de chercher de la musique contemporaine de ses disciples ou de ses pairs. Car malgré les différences marquées de forme et de langage,

et les trente-trois ans qui séparent *Ulisse* de son premier opéra, *L'Orfeo*, les deux opéras révèlent une évidente cohérence dans la mise en musique du texte – qui témoigne de son attachement aux idéaux de ce qu'il appelait « imitation » et « représentation ». Ainsi, pour le chœur des naïades à l'acte 1 scène 6, lorsqu'elles sauvent ses biens et ses trésors sur le rivage, nous avons trouvé que le *balletto* à trois voix de ses *Scherzi musicali* (1607), « De la bellezza le dovute lodi », convenait très bien. Pour le *ballo greco* de l'acte 2 scène 6, où les prétendants intensifient leur cour à Pénélope, nous sommes retournés à trois sections de son ballet choral *Tirsi e Clori* (1615) (sans doute sa première œuvre semi-théâtrale composée à Venise, et publiée quatre ans plus tard dans son septième livre de madrigaux). Enfin, nous avons trouvé la place pour une *entrata* brève et angoissée de son *Ballo delle ingrate* (1608, mais publié deux ans seulement avant la création d'*Ulisse*) pour la pantomime des prétendants qui tentent vainement de bander l'arc d'Ulysse à l'acte 2 scène 12, et un fragment fantasque pour annoncer l'entrée d'Euryclée à l'acte 3 scène 8.

Les décisions relatives à toutes les autres questions d'édition et d'interprétation découlaient de la prémisse initiale – jouer la trilogie non pas dans des théâtres à l'italienne généreusement équipés de machinerie, décors et accessoires, mais dans des salles de concert (l'exception étant le Teatro la Fenice de Venise, où nous avons donné deux cycles complets sur une avant-scène ouverte). Notre but était de faire toucher à Monteverdi, au-delà des amateurs d'opéra, un public plus

vaste et plus jeune. En présentant sa trilogie dans des mises en scène vivantes mais dépouillées, nous visions à communiquer la force radicale et explosive de ces grands drames musicaux, les profondeurs émotionnelles qu'ils sondent, et leur climat étonnamment moderne, sans perdre l'intimité intrinsèque de forme et de dialectique. Nous savons (cette fois grâce à un autre de ses librettistes, Michelangelo Torcigliani) que Monteverdi était toujours à l'affût de livrets avec des climats changeants – « parce qu'ils lui donnent la possibilité de montrer les merveilles de son art avec tout un registre d'émotions, adaptant ses notes aux mots et aux passions de telle manière que le chanteur rie, pleure, enrage, compatisse, et fasse tout ce qu'on lui demande ; entre-temps l'auditeur est amené par le même élan à percevoir la diversité et la force de ces mêmes passions ».

Une grande partie de nos répétitions a été passée à explorer la brillante fusion de la musique et du texte chez Monteverdi, et à nous assurer que chanteurs et instrumentistes soient les uns et les autres pleinement investis dans le texte. Suivant les préceptes de son contemporain Marco da Galliano, lui-même compositeur d'opéras, nous cherchions « à ciseler les syllabes pour faire bien comprendre les mots », non seulement par une diction exacte dans sa prononciation et ses inflexions linguistiques, mais avec un plaisir sensuel. Notre coach linguistique, Matteo Dalle Fratte, s'est donné beaucoup de mal pour faire comprendre à la distribution la beauté envoûtante de l'italien chanté lorsque les consonnes sont projetées de manière

percutante et expressive en contrepoint avec le lisse flot legato des voyelles. Cela s'applique non seulement aux consonnes doubles, mais aussi aux virgules de la ponctuation, aux accents agogiques, aux répétitions de mots et aux exclamations. C'est seulement une fois que la technique a été pleinement maîtrisée par les chanteurs-acteurs (à l'opposé des redoutables habitudes dont souffrent beaucoup de chanteurs d'opéra) que la perception des mots par l'auditeur peut produire un véritable frisson ; mais cela souligne aussi le vocabulaire expressif de Monteverdi dans sa mise en musique du texte et sa manière habile d'imiter les accents parlés. La légère anticipation de la consonne initiale et un minuscule retard avant la voyelle reflètent le processus mental de la narration. Pour moi, c'est analogue aux manières dont Monteverdi utilise à la fois le rythme et le contrepoint. Dans ses opéras, il emploie habituellement une alternance de mètres binaires et ternaires avec un *tactus* implicite (une battue régulière et invariable). C'est ici que naît l'intérêt rythmique. À quoi s'ajoute la tension harmonique qu'il instaure entre ses lignes vocales et la basse continue qui les soutient. Celle-ci procède normalement avec une pulsation ou un rythme harmonique régulier, mais s'épanouit en dissonances expressives à des moments-clefs, lorsqu'il imagine que ces deux lignes complémentaires doivent entrer en collision et en conflit.

On imagine donc mon plaisir en découvrant que le regretté metteur en scène Sir Peter Hall a relevé quelque chose d'étonnamment similaire

dans la technique utilisée par Shakespeare pour ses grandes tragédies et pièces tardives, écrites exactement au même moment où Monteverdi débutait comme compositeur d'opéras. Hall fait référence à « une liberté dans le vers qui est parfaitement miraculeuse. [Dans *Le Conte d'hiver*], la passion tortueuse et la paranoïa de Léonte sont très justement exprimées par ses rythmes irréguliers et figés, et ses mauvais accents. Mais ces irrégularités n'ont de sens, sur le plan des émotions, et ne peuvent affecter le public que si l'acteur connaît la régularité sous-jacente qui est en dessous. Il doit savourer les décalages rythmiques, être porté par les irrégularités et utiliser les bosses dans la fluidité à des fins émotionnelles. » Jusque-là, le parallèle est frappant. Hall compare l'interprétation de la poésie du Shakespeare de la maturité aux défis qu'affronte un grand musicien de jazz – bien que cela s'applique tout aussi bien, à mon sens, à un chanteur ou à un continuiste qui interprète les opéras de Monteverdi : « Il faut garder la battue, et toujours sentir le rythme. Mais c'est la tension entre cette régularité et l'irrégularité du discours [ou, dans le cas de Monteverdi, la ligne vocale opposée à la basse continue] qui exprime le trouble émotionnel. Plus la poésie est près de s'effondrer, plus l'expression est torturée et chargée d'émotion. Mais elle ne doit jamais s'effondrer, pas plus que le musicien de jazz ne peut jamais manquer le temps ou être *out*. L'acteur doit risquer la désintégration rythmique, mais ne jamais y céder. Ce que le public reçoit est donc inattendu, dangereux, et toujours imprévisible » (*Exposed by the Mask*). John Berger

exprime quelque chose de similaire : « La façon dont les chanteurs jouent avec la linéarité du temps ou la défient a quelque chose en commun avec ce que font les acrobates et les jongleurs avec la force de gravitation [...]. Le tempo, la battue, les boucles, les répétitions d'un chant construisent un abri contre l'écoulement du temps linéaire : un abri dans lequel futur, présent et passé peuvent consoler, provoquer, ironiser et s'inspirer l'un l'autre » (*Confabulations*).

Dans *Ulysse*, on entend comment les habiles transitions de Monteverdi entre la conversation en « parole chantée » (récitatif) et le chant pur (aria) ou une combinaison des deux (arioso) servent à intensifier l'expression du tempérament et de l'état d'esprit des personnages. En pratique, chaque interprète a besoin d'avoir constamment conscience de la direction du discours – de la distinction cruciale chez Monteverdi entre narration (diégèse) et représentation (mimesis) – et comment cela affecte le mouvement vers l'avant de l'action, ainsi que le contenu émotionnel et le « ton » de chaque monologue ou échange. Cette distinction, qui était quelque chose de nouveau dans l'évolution du théâtre musical de l'époque, s'est développée en parallèle avec les techniques que Shakespeare explorait dans ses pièces tardives. Quand Hamlet dit à l'acte 2 scène 2 : « Maintenant je suis seul. – Ô misérable rustre, maroufle que je suis ! » – il n'est manifestement pas seul, mais s'adresse à un auditoire bruyant au Théâtre du Globe. Comment créer l'illusion d'intimité ? Voilà la question critique. Comment révéler une émotion crue et extrêmement personnelle avec une intensité irrésistible, mais sans



que personne ait à forcer sa voix ?

Pour nos représentations, plutôt que de confiner les instrumentistes dans une fosse, nous avons décidé de suivre les conseils de Marco da Gagliano : « Soyez avisés que les instruments qui doivent accompagner les voix solistes doivent être placés de manière à regarder les acteurs en face, de sorte que, s'entendant mieux l'un l'autre, ils peuvent avancer ensemble. » Il y avait deux avantages supplémentaires : cela permettait au public de voir complètement la « salle des machines » du drame, avec les instrumentistes déployés en deux demi-lunes symétriques, et d'assister à l'interaction entre musiciens et chanteurs à chaque tournant. Et comme nous jouions dans des salles de concert moyennes à grandes, et n'étions pas contraints par l'*instrumentarium* économiquement austère et spatialement restreint des théâtres publics vénitiens des années 1640, nous avons choisi d'augmenter le groupe de continuo pour y inclure un *lirone*, une harpe et des paires de flûtes à bec et de cornets, sans compromettre l'intimité du dialogue ni la projection des mots. De même, nous avons sous-tendu avec une vigoureuse articulation des cordes les passages où Monteverdi recourt à un trope guerrier dans son style *concitato* (agité) pour exprimer le mépris, la colère ou le bellicisme. C'est analogue à sa pratique dans ses *Madrigali guerrieri e amorosi* (1638) et à ce qu'il prescrit pour la lutte d'Ulysse avec Iro et la *sinfonia da guerra* qui conclut l'acte 2. Ailleurs, de temps à autre, nous avons introduit des lignes improvisées pour souligner la distinction entre les dieux et les humains, et entre le

monde pastoral bienveillant et le monde suffocant de la cour de Pénélope \*\*.

Cette juxtaposition de deux mondes opposés est étonnamment proche de ce qu'on trouve dans *Comme il vous plaira* de Shakespeare, où la forêt représente la liberté, la bonté naturelle et la vie en harmonie avec la Nature, tandis que la cour, peuplée de sycophantes et de prétendants, symbolise tout ce qui est gâté et traître. Pourrait-on donc considérer l'*Ulysse* de Monteverdi comme une espèce d'anticomédie shakespearienne ? Après tout, l'opéra culmine dans un retour au lit conjugal après une histoire d'erreur d'identité dé mêlée, avant que l'ordre naturel ne soit finalement rétabli. Aucune autre intrigue de l'époque n'a ce genre de trajectoire mis à part la tragicomédie de Shakespeare. Mais les parallèles s'étendent bien au-delà. Dans son portrait d'Ulysse, et plus encore de Pénélope, Monteverdi révèle son profond intérêt pour un monde intérieur, comme fait Shakespeare dans *Hamlet* et *Le Roi Lear* : le dramaturge et le compositeur explorent tous deux des pensées et sentiments complexes qui vont au-delà des mots et des actions. *Il Ritorno d'Ulysse*, l'avant-dernier opéra de Monteverdi, marque une autre étape dans une vie passée à transformer la musique – d'un acte d'habile artifice reflétant l'harmonie des sphères en une forme d'expression enracinée dans les vérités et émotions humaines. Cela correspondait à un changement fondamental – d'un langage musical qui parlait essentiellement en affirmations métaphysiques en un langage capable de refléter un monde plein de misère, de dépravation, mais aussi d'amour

rédempteur. Il se trouve qu'il coïncide exactement avec l'une des périodes turbulentes de l'histoire de la peinture, où des artistes comme Vélasquez, Rembrandt ou Artemisia Gentileschi, tous au faîte de leurs facultés, libéraient leur énergie et prenaient des libertés équivalentes avec les conventions vénérées.

Y a-t-il aucun autre opéra qui culmine dans un duo où les deux protagonistes chantent ensemble pour la toute première fois ? Ils ne se sont pas parlé pendant vingt ans. Il revient après avoir été porté disparu. Elle est restée dévouée et inflexible, ne laissant éclater son chant que lorsqu'elle a la preuve irréfutable qu'il est son homme. Mais maintenant ils partagent le langage de l'amour avec une touchante unanimité qui est une proclamation de vie.

\* Je remercie James Halliday et Paolo Zanzu pour leur aide à cet égard.

\*\* Je remercie les collègues suivants pour leur précieuses contributions improvisées : Paolo Zanzu, Antonio Greco, Kati Debretzeni, Rachel Beckett, Jamie Savan et James Halliday.

## Je suis une chose mortelle

Tim Carter

La première ligne du prologue d'*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1640), prononcée par le personnage allégorique de L'humana fragilità (La Fragilité humaine), pourrait avoir eu une certaine résonance pour Claudio Monteverdi. À soixante-treize ans, il accomplissait un geste extraordinaire en retournant à la scène lyrique. Sa longue histoire de compositeur pour le théâtre avait débuté alors qu'il était employé comme musicien à la cour du duc Vincent Gonzague de Mantoue. Là, il fut toujours mêlé à tous les principaux genres théâtraux de la fin de la Renaissance, dont les pièces avec *intermedi*, les *balli* chantés et dansés, et une nouvelle invention florentine : la *favola in musica* – autrement dit, ce que nous appelons désormais opéra. Dans ce dernier genre, *L'Orfeo* (1607) est une œuvre tout à fait remarquable, et le plus ancien exemple qui ait trouvé sa place au répertoire. Monteverdi composa ensuite *Arianna* (1608), qui attira énormément d'attention à l'époque, mais dont la musique est maintenant perdue, mis à part la célèbre lamentation d'Ariane.

En s'installant à Venise en 1613, Monteverdi, en sa qualité de maître de chapelle de la basilique Saint-Marc, se voyait nécessairement contraint de se focaliser davantage sur la musique pour l'église et les cérémonies officielles. Mais il continua d'écrire de la musique profane et même théâtrale en réponse à des commandes émanant de Mantoue et d'autres cours d'Italie du Nord (dont Parme), ainsi que pour des nobles vénitiens plus près de chez lui ; et dans les années 1630 il noua des liens avec les Habsbourg à Vienne. Personne, toutefois, ne pouvait s'attendre à ce qu'il revienne à de grands opéras si

tard dans sa carrière. Pourquoi le fit-il, et comment réussit-il à s'adapter aux nouveaux styles musicaux, en rapide évolution ? Ce sont des questions qui demandent à être explorées.

### L'opéra à Venise

Dans le premier tiers du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'opéra n'avait qu'une histoire sporadique dans les cours d'Italie du Nord et à Rome. Les opéras étaient essentiellement des œuvres de circonstance destinées à une représentation unique pour célébrer un événement spécial. Ils n'étaient pas non plus toujours très appréciés, car les spectateurs de la cour n'avaient pas grand désir de rester assis pendant de longs moments à observer passivement un drame musical sur scène. Le nombre d'opéras produit était restreint – et le nombre de ceux qui étaient repris plus limité encore –, si bien qu'il est difficile de parler d'une tradition continue.

En 1637, le Teatro San Cassiano à Venise ouvrit ses portes en tant que théâtre d'opéra pour un public payant. L'initiative semble être venue de deux musiciens poètes, Benedetto Ferrari et Francesco Manelli, qui formèrent une troupe sur le modèle de la *commedia dell'arte*, régulièrement présente dans les théâtres vénitiens et ailleurs. Toujours est-il que l'idée prit : cinq opéras nouveaux virent le jour au cours des trois saisons suivantes, et trois autres théâtres d'opéra avaient ouvert dans la ville dès 1641. À la fin de la saison 1646-1647, trente-trois œuvres nouvelles et six reprises y avaient été montées.

Le nouvel opéra public fut manifestement un succès commercial. Venise avait un marché tout prêt, avec non seulement ses citoyens, mais aussi les touristes qui faisaient (et font encore) le voyage pour admirer les merveilles architecturales et artistiques de la ville – ainsi que ses plaisirs sensuels. Lorsque le voyageur anglais Thomas Coryate visita Venise en 1608, il attira particulièrement l'attention sur la musique qu'on pouvait entendre dans les églises ou les rues, et grâce aux doigts et aux gosiers gazouillants de séduisantes courtisanes. Le fait que la saison d'opéra se déroulait essentiellement pendant le carnaval (officiellement, du lendemain de Noël au commencement du Carême) tendait à accentuer les plaisirs lascifs tirés de son sujet, mais aussi de ses interprètes.

L'industrie de l'opéra qui en résulta à Venise reposait sur de complexes interactions entre les propriétaires de théâtres, les impresarios et les entrepreneurs indépendants : poètes, compositeurs, chanteurs, instrumentistes, maîtres de ballet, décorateurs, fabricants de costumes – et ainsi de suite. Sans doute y avait-il de l'argent à gagner dans cette entreprise, même si le succès dépendait d'un pari qui pouvait être gagné ou perdu. On ne sait pas si Monteverdi y voyait un éventuel profit. Mais en tant que plus éminent musicien dans la Venise de l'époque, il fut manifestement sollicité pour servir la cause.

## Monteverdi (re)prend la scène

Monteverdi procéda prudemment, restant en coulisses pendant les trois premières saisons d'opéra public à Venise. Pour le carnaval de 1640-1641, il mit aussi deux théâtres en concurrence, reprenant son *Arianna* au Teatro San Moisè et produisant un nouvel opéra, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, probablement au Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo. Il est difficile d'imaginer ce que le public vénitien a pu penser d'*Arianna*, qui avait alors plus de trente ans (on ne sait pas si Monteverdi en révisa la musique, mais le texte n'avait pas beaucoup changé). Quant à *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, l'impulsion semble être venue de son librettiste, le noble Vénitien Giacomo Badoaro, qui affirmait dans une lettre ouverte au compositeur qu'il voulait le tenter de sortir de sa retraite pour que le public vénitien puisse comprendre comment les émotions véritables pouvaient être représentées sur la scène musicale, loin des fades imitations d'autres compositeurs contemporains.

Monteverdi releva le défi, et avec un succès significatif, semble-t-il : *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* fut donné au moins dix fois au cours de la première saison, puis emmené en tournée à Bologne par Ferrari et Manelli, et ensuite repris à Venise l'année suivante. Pour la saison 1641-1642, Monteverdi composa aussi *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* (dont la musique est perdue), et pour 1642-1643 une œuvre tout à fait étonnante, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

Comme souvent pour l'opéra vénitien, les sources qui subsistent pour *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* sont quelque peu problématiques. Certains

livrets divisent l'opéra en cinq actes au lieu de trois, et il subsiste une version avec un prologue différent (pour lequel nous n'avons pas de musique). L'unique partition que nous ayons fut probablement copiée dans les années 1650, avant de parvenir à Vienne (où elle est désormais conservée) quelques décennies plus tard. Il manque une partie de la musique (par exemple un *ballo* à l'acte 2, au moment où les prétendants courtisent Pénélope), qui peut être empruntée de manière plausible à d'autres sources.

## Grèce, Rome... Venise

*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* est fondé sur l'*Odyssée* d'Homère (XIII-XXIII), *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* sur l'*Énéide* de Virgile et *L'incoronazione di Poppea* essentiellement sur l'historien romain Tacite. Ces sources se distinguent quelque peu de celles des autres opéras vénitiens de l'époque en ce qu'elles puisent au mythe classique, à l'épopée de la Renaissance (L'Arioste et Le Tasse) ou à la pastorale. Mais si le mythe, l'épopée et la pastorale sont toujours ouverts à l'interprétation symbolique et allégorique – c'est leur propos –, Monteverdi et ses librettistes paraissent leur donner des résonances plus proches de chez eux.

La question semble s'articuler autour du rôle de l'Accademia degli Incogniti vénitienne, groupe libertin de nobles vénitiens qui étaient aussi d'ardents républicains dans leur orientation politique (comme l'était Venise elle-même). Ainsi qu'on le voit dans d'autres opéras de l'époque émanant des Incogniti, la représentation sur scène de bons

Greco, de bons ou mauvais Troyens (selon le point de vue), et de mauvais Romains avait manifestement de fortes connotations politiques, étant donné notamment la relation profondément problématique de Venise elle-même avec Rome et la papauté. Dans le cas d'*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, la descente de la « cour » de Pénélope dans les dépravations de prétendants importuns et de leurs parasites porte un message fort : notre héros, Ulysse, n'a besoin que d'une intervention divine minime pour rétablir l'ordre dans un monde politique si corrompu.

### Musique et morale

Par définition ou presque, et à pratiquement toute époque, l'opéra est en général moralement suspect – non seulement à cause de son sujet, mais aussi en raison de son emploi de musique. Les partisans du genre affirment que la musique explore des situations dramatiques et des profondeurs émotionnelles et psychologiques auxquelles la simple parole n'a pas accès. Ses détracteurs – s'ils ne rejettent pas simplement l'opéra en raison de son absence de vraisemblance – soutiennent que cette défense est inepte : l'opéra est frivole et repose uniquement sur de vaines démonstrations de virtuosité vocale.

L'opéra de cour à ses débuts avait établi des principes selon lesquels les personnages chantaient leur rôle dans un style déclamatoire (qu'on appelle maintenant récitatif), plus sensible aux exigences du texte qu'à la musique en soi. Ce style déclamatoire pouvait ensuite se transformer en moments plus lyriques et plus chantants à des endroits spécifiques

de l'action, lorsqu'un chant véritable pouvait se justifier sur scène (comme au moment où Orphée chante pour les puissances d'Hadès), ou lorsqu'on pouvait en insérer un par convention (par exemple un chœur de fin d'acte). La distinction était claire sur le plan musical, mais aussi poétique : les textes des « chants » – on pourrait commencer à les appeler « airs » – étaient en strophes régulières du point de vue du mètre et de la rime.

L'opéra public imposa un changement dans les priorités – qui a envie de payer pour entendre un opéra contenant uniquement de la parole chantée ? – et fit donc émerger le dilemme fondamental de l'opéra : pourquoi devrait-on y chanter ? Bien sûr, le chant n'est pas inapproprié pour certains types de personnages – dieux, bergers, servantes – ou situations (séduction, incantation, scènes de sommeil, et ainsi de suite), et tout livret d'opéra sensé introduisait de tels prétextes pour le chant à chaque occasion qui s'offrait. La formule est claire dans *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, notamment dans le traitement du berger Eumée, des amants de classe inférieure Mélantho et Eurymaque, et des divinités, avec en particulier une écriture extrêmement virtuose pour Minerve et Junon. Conformément à son statut, Ulysse tend à adopter un langage musical plus retenu – même lors de ses joyeuses retrouvailles avec son fils Télémaque –, bien qu'il ne soit pas opposé au chant quand le moment semble opportun. Quant aux prétendants et au parasite Irus, leur penchant pour le chant, plutôt que pour la parole chantée, tend à les identifier comme des personnages peu nobles sur le plan du caractère et des actions.

## La voix de Pénélope

Pénélope est manifestement problématique, toutefois. D'un côté, le public vénitien aimait les cantatrices et leurs voix séductrices. De l'autre, un noble personnage féminin qui « chante » trop volontiers, et trop mélodieusement, entre forcément en terrain dangereux : peut-on se fier à sa vertu, ou est-elle fragile ? On rencontre Pénélope pour la première fois tout au début de l'acte I, où elle déplore l'absence d'Ulysse de manière typique d'une femme qui se lamente, avec de francs échos du *Lamento d'Arianna*, seule musique à subsister de l'opéra de Monteverdi de 1608 (repris, nous l'avons vu, à Venise). Si sa plainte en récitatif est éloquente, musicalement, elle a peu de chose à y dire.

À mesure que l'opéra progresse, les servantes de Pénélope, puis ses prétendants, l'assiègent de chant, l'entourant des airs séducteurs de mesure ternaire qui se répandaient dans l'opéra vénitien. Elle résiste chaque fois farouchement ; son langage musical devient même de plus en plus aride à mesure qu'elle sombre dans la paralysie émotionnelle. Ce n'est que vers la fin de l'acte III, lorsqu'elle commence à croire que l'étranger devant elle est effectivement son mari depuis longtemps perdu, qu'elle se met à retrouver sa voix et à lui permettre de s'épanouir dans un superbe moment de libération d'autant plus puissant que Pénélope a précisément si peu « chanté » jusque-là. Elle peut aimer – et donc chanter – de nouveau, et rares sont ceux qui la condamneront pour cela.

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CD1<sup>Act 1</sup>

## 1 Prologo

*Humana Fragilità, Tempo, Fortuna, Amore*

### **Humana Fragilità**

Mortal cosa son io, fattura humana.  
Tutto mi turba, un soffio sol m'abbatte.  
Il Tempo che mi crea, quel mi combatte.

### **Tempo**

Salvo è niente  
dal mio dente.  
Ei rode,  
ei gode.  
Non fuggite, o mortali,  
ché, se ben zoppo, ho l'ali.

### **Humana Fragilità**

Mortal cosa son io, fattura humana.  
Senza periglio invan ricerco loco,  
ché frale vita è di Fortuna un gioco.

### **Fortuna**

Mia vita son voglie,  
le gioie, le doglie.  
Son cieca, son sorda,  
non vedo, non odo.  
Ricchezze, grandezze  
dispenso a mio modo.

### **Humana Fragilità**

Mortal cosa son io, fattura humana.  
Al Tiranno d'Amor serva sen giace  
la mia fiorita età, verde e fugace.

## Prologue

*Human Frailty, Time, Fortune, Cupid*

### **Human Frailty**

A mortal thing am I, in human form:  
everything distresses me, a puff of wind can fell me;  
Time who created me also fights against me.

### **Time**

Nothing is safe  
from my bite.  
It gnaws  
and delights in it.  
Flee not, mortals,  
for though I limp, I have wings.

### **Human Frailty**

A mortal thing am I, in human form:  
in vain do I seek a place safe from dangers,  
for frail life is a plaything of Fortune.

### **Fortune**

Desires, joys  
and sorrows are my life.  
I'm blind, I'm deaf,  
I see not, I hear not;  
riches and greatness  
I distribute according to my fancy.

### **Human Frailty**

A mortal thing am I, in human form:  
my green and fleeting youth  
is enslaved to tyrannical Cupid.

**Amore**

Dio de' Dei feritor, mi dice il mondo Amor.  
Cieco saettator, alato, ignudo,  
contro il mio stral non val difesa, o scudo.

**Humana Fragilità**

Misera son ben io, fattura humana.  
Creder a ciechi e zoppi è cosa vana.

**Tempo**

Per me fragile,

**Fortuna**

Per me misero,

**Amore**

Per me torbido,

**Tempo, Fortuna, Amore**

quest'huom sarà.

**Tempo**

Il Tempo ch'affretta,

**Fortuna**

Fortuna ch'alletta,

**Amore**

Amor che saetta,

**Tempo, Fortuna, Amore**

pietate non ha.  
Fragile, misero, torbido, quest'huom sarà.

**Cupid**

The world calls me, Cupid, the god who pierces gods.  
A blind, winged, nude marksman,  
no defence or shield is of any avail against my arrow.

**Human Frailty**

Wretched I am indeed, in human form:  
to believe the blind and the lame is a vain thing.

**Time,**

Through me frail,

**Fortune**

Through me wretched,

**Cupid**

Through me distressed,

**Time, Fortune, Cupid**

This man will be.

**Time,**

Time that rushes,

**Fortune**

Fortune that entices,

**Cupid**

Cupid, who fires his arrows,

**Time, Fortune, Cupid**

Have no pity.  
Frail, wretched, distressed will this man be.

## ATTO 1

### ! Scena I

*Reggia*  
*Penelope, Ericlea*

#### **Penelope**

Di misera Regina  
non terminati mai dolenti affanni.  
L'aspettato non giunge,  
e pur fuggono gli anni.  
La serie del penar è lunga, ah! troppo.  
A chi vive in angosce il Tempo è zoppo.  
Fallacissima speme,  
speranze non più verdi, ma canute,  
all'invecchiato male  
non promette più pace o salute.  
Scorsero quattro lustri  
dal memorabil giorno  
in cui con sue rapine  
il superbo Troiano  
chiamò l'alta sua Patria alle ruine.  
A ragion arse Troia,  
poiché l'Amor impuro,  
ch'è un delitto di foco,  
si purga con le fiamme.  
Ma ben contro ragione, per l'altrui fallo  
condannata innocente,  
de l'altrui colpe io sono  
l'afflitta penitente.  
Ulisse accorto e saggio,  
tu che punir gl'adùlteri ti vanti,

## ACT 1

### Scene I

*The palace*  
*Penelope, Eurycleia*

#### **Penelope**

Sorrow and trouble never end for this  
miserable queen!  
The awaited one does not return  
and the years rush by;  
my torments have lasted, alas, too long;  
time is lame for whoever lives in anguish.  
Misguided hope,  
hope no longer green but hoary,  
you no longer promise peace  
nor healing to my persistent pain.  
Two decades have passed  
since the unforgettable day when,  
through an abduction,  
the proud Trojan  
plunged his illustrious homeland into ruin.  
Troy burned justly,  
for impure love,  
which is a crime of fire,  
must be purged by fire.  
But most unjustly,  
while innocent,  
I am condemned to suffer  
because of others' misdeeds.  
Shrewd, wise Ulysses,  
who boasts of punishing adulterers,

aguzzi l'armi e susciti le fiamme  
per vendicar gl'errori  
d'una profuga greca, e 'n tanto lasci  
la tua casta consorte  
fra nemici rivali  
in dubbio de l'honore, in forse a morte.  
Ogni partenza attende  
desiato ritorno,  
tu sol del tuo tornar perdesti il giorno.

### **Ericlea**

Infelice Ericlea,  
nutrice sconsolata,  
compiangi il duol de la Regina amata.

### **Penelope**

Non è dunque per me varia la sorte?  
Cangiò forse Fortuna  
la volubile ruota in stabil seggio?  
E la sua pronta vela,  
ch'ogn'human caso porta  
fra l'incostanza a volo,  
sol per me non raccoglie un fiato solo?  
Cangian per altri pur aspetto in Cielo  
le stelle erranti e fisse.  
Torna, deh torna, Ulisse.  
Penelope t'aspetta,  
l'innocente sospira,  
piange l'offesa, e contro  
il tenace offensor neppur s'adira.  
All'anima affannata  
porto le tue discolpe,  
acciò non resti

you sharpen your weapons and fan the flames  
to avenge the misdeeds  
of a faithless Greek woman,  
while you leave your chaste wife  
among hostile rivals,  
her honour, perhaps her life, at stake.  
Every departure longingly  
awaits a return,  
you alone have lost your day of returning.

### **Eurycleia**

Unhappy Eurycleia,  
inconsolable nurse,  
share the grief of your beloved queen.

### **Penelope**

Is there then no change in my fate?  
Has Fortune perhaps stopped  
her ever-turning wheel?  
And her quick sail  
that carries every human destiny  
through changes  
gathers no breath of wind for me?  
The stars change their pattern in the sky  
only for others.  
Return, oh return, Ulysses!  
Penelope awaits you,  
the innocent one sighs,  
the offended one weeps, and yet harbours  
no anger against the offender.  
I make excuses for you  
to my distressed soul  
and instead of thinking you cruel

di crudeltà macchiato,  
ma fabbro de' miei danni incolpo il Fato.  
Così per tua difesa,  
col destino, col Cielo  
fomento guerre, e stabilisco risse.  
Torna, deh torna, Ulisse.

### **Ericlea**

Partir senza ritorno  
non può stella influir.  
Non è partir, non è,  
ahi, che non è partir.

### **Penelope**

Torna il tranquillo al mare,  
torna il Zeffiro al prato,  
l'Aurora, mentre al Sol fa dolce invito,  
è un ritorno del dì, che è pria partito.  
Tornan le brine in terra,  
tornano al centro i sassi,  
e con lubrici passi  
torna all'oceano il rivo.  
L'huomo qua giù, ch'è vivo,  
lunge da' suoi principi  
porta un'alma celeste e un corpo frale.  
Tosto more il mortale,  
e torna l'alma in Cielo,  
e torna il corpo in polve  
dopo breve soggiorno.  
Tu sol del tuo tornar perdesti il giorno.  
Torna, ché mentre porti empie dimore  
al mio fiero dolore,  
veggo del mio morir l'hore prefisse.  
Torna, deh torna, Ulisse.

I hold Fate responsible for my misfortune.  
Thus in your defence  
I take issue and argue  
with Fate, with Heaven.  
Return, oh return, Ulysses!

### **Eurycleia**

A departure without return  
cannot be the will of the stars;  
this is not a departure,  
alas, this is not a departure.

### **Penelope**

Calm returns to the sea,  
Zephyr returns to the meadow,  
the dawn meanwhile sweetly invites the sun  
to a return of the day which had departed.  
The waters return to the earth,  
the stones return to the centre,  
and with sensual motion  
the river returns to the ocean.  
Man, who lives down here,  
away from his origins,  
has a celestial soul and a frail body.  
Soon the mortal dies  
and the soul returns to heaven  
and the body returns to dust  
after a brief sojourn;  
you alone have lost the day of your return.  
Return, for while  
my grief has no abode  
I can see the preordained hour of my death.  
Return, oh return, Ulysses!



### 3 Scena II

*Melanto, Eurimaco*

#### **Melanto**

Duri, e penosi  
son gl'amorosi  
fieri desir.  
Ma al fin son cari,  
se prima amari  
gl'aspri martir.  
Ché s'arde un core,  
d'allegrezza è il foco,  
né mai perde in amor  
chi compie il gioco.

Chi pria s'accende  
procelle attende  
da un bianco sen.  
Ma corseggiando  
trova in amando  
porto seren.

Si piange pria,  
ma al fin la gioia ha loco,  
né mai perde in amor  
chi compie il gioco.

#### **Eurimaco**

Bella Melanto mia,  
graziosa Melanto,  
il tuo canto è un incanto,  
il tuo volto è magia.  
Bella Melanto mia,

### Scene II

*Melantho, Eurymachus*

#### **Melantho**

Bitter are the torments  
that the lover suffers  
in his desire;  
but at last, the harsh sufferings,  
though bitter at first,  
are cherished.  
If a heart is burning  
it is a fire of joy,  
and he never loses  
who plays the game of love.

Whoever is first inflamed  
by a white bosom  
can expect storms,  
but riding them out  
he finds in loving  
a serene harbour.

First, there is weeping,  
but at last joy takes its place,  
he never loses  
who plays the game of love.

#### **Eurymachus**

My beautiful Melantho,  
delightful Melantho,  
your song is enchantment,  
your face is magic.  
My beautiful Melantho!

è tutto laccio in te ciò ch'altri ammaga,  
ciò che laccio non è, fa tutto piaga.

**Melanto**

Vezzoso garruletto,  
o, come ben tu sai  
ingemmar le bellezze,  
indorar a tuo pro d'un volto i rai.  
Lieto vezzeggia pur. Son glorie mie  
le tue dolci bugie.

**Eurimaco**

Bugia sarebbe s'io  
lodando non t'amassi,  
ch'il negar d'adorar  
confessata deità  
è bugia d'impietà.

**Melanto, Eurimaco**

De' nostri amor concordi  
sia pur la fiamma accesa,  
ch'amato il non amar arreca offesa.

**Eurimaco**

Né con ragion s'offende  
colui che per offese amor ti rende.

**Melanto**

S'io non t'amo, cor mio, che sia di gelo  
l'alma ch'ho in seno a tuoi begli occhi avante.

Everything about you that enchants others  
is captivating  
and what is not captivating is wounding

**Melantho**

Loquacious flatterer,  
oh how well you know  
how to sing of beauty,  
to describe to your own advantage  
the radiance of a face. Flatter away.  
Your sweet lies are my adornments.

**Eurymachus**

It would be lies  
if I, in praising, did not love you,  
for refusing to adore  
an acknowledged deity  
is blasphemy.

**Melantho, Eurymachus**

May the flame of our mutual love  
be lit;  
for it is an offence not to return love.

**Eurymachus**

And it is not right to hurt  
whomever reciprocates offence with love.

**Melantho**

If I do not love you, my heart, may my soul  
turn to ice before your eyes.

**Eurimaco**

S'in adorarti il cor non ho costante,  
non mi sia stanza il mondo o tetto il cielo.

**Melanto, Eurimaco**

Dolce mia vita sei,  
lieto mio ben sarai,  
nodo sì bel non si disciolga mai.

**Melanto**

Come il desio m'invoglia,  
Eurimaco, mia vita,  
senza fren, senza morso  
dar nel tuo sen alle mie gioie il corso.

**Eurimaco**

Come volentieri cangierei  
questa reggia in un deserto  
ove occhio curioso  
a veder non giungesse i nostri errori,

**Melanto, Eurimaco**

ch'ad un focoso petto  
il rispetto è dispetto.

**Eurimaco**

Tu dunque t'affatica,  
suscita in lei le fiamme.

**Eurymachus**

If my heart is not constant in its devotion,  
the world shall no longer be abode  
nor the sky a roof for me.

**Melantho, Eurymachus**

My sweet life,  
you shall be my beloved,  
may such a beautiful knot never be dissolved.

**Melantho**

Oh, how desire inspires me,  
Eurymachus, my life,  
to fulfil without any regret or restraint  
my dream of love with you!

**Eurymachus**

Oh how gladly I would exchange  
this palace for a desert,  
where curious eyes  
could not pursue us.

**Melantho, Eurymachus**

For an ardent bosom  
despises every obstacle.

**Eurymachus**

So try harder  
to kindle love in her!

**Melanto**

Ritenterò quell'alma  
 pertinace, ostinata,  
 ritoccherò quel core  
 ch'indiamanta l'honore.

**Melanto, Eurimaco**

Dolce mia vita sei,  
 lieto mio ben sarai,  
 nodo sì bel non si disciolga mai.

**Scena IV – Scena V**

*Nettuno sorge dal mare, poi Giove in Cielo*

**Nettuno**

Superbo è l'huom, et è del suo peccato  
 cagion, benché lontano, il Ciel cortese,  
 facile, ah! troppo, in perdonar l'offese.  
 Fa guerra col destin, pugna col Fato,  
 tutt'osa, tutt'ardisce l'humana libertate.  
 Indomita si rende,  
 e l'arbitrio de l'huom  
 col Ciel contende.  
 Ma se Giove benigno  
 i trascorsi de l'huom troppo perdona,  
 tenga egli a voglia sua nella gran destra  
 il fulmine otioso,  
 tengalo invendicato.  
 Ma non soffra Nettuno  
 col proprio dishonor l'human peccato.

**Melantho**

I will try again  
 that obstinate soul,  
 touch again that heart  
 which is a temple of chastity.

**Melantho, Eurymachus**

My sweet life,  
 you shall be my beloved,  
 may such a beautiful knot never be dissolved.

**Scene IV – Scene V**

*Neptune rises from the sea, then Jupiter in Heaven*

**Neptune**

Man is arrogant, and is the cause of his own sinning,  
 though remote, kind heaven  
 is only too willing to pardon offences.  
 Human freedom wages war against Destiny,  
 fights with fate, dares all, risks all,  
 makes itself indomitable,  
 and the will of man  
 struggles against heaven.  
 But if benign Jupiter  
 pardons too readily the transgressions of man,  
 he holds at his will the lightning idle  
 in his mighty right hand.  
 He may not exact revenge,  
 but Neptune should not accept  
 his honour to be stained by human transgression.

**Ulisse** (*fra sé parla, e dice*)

Sempre l'human bisogno il Ciel soccorre.  
Quel giovinetto, tenero negli anni,  
mal pratico d'inganni,  
forse che'l mio pensier farà contento,  
che non ha frode in seno  
chi non ha pelo al mento.

**Minerva**

Giovinezza è un bel tesor  
che fa ricco in gioia un sen.  
Per lei zoppo il Tempo vien,  
per lei vola alato Amor.  
Giovinezza è un bel tesor.

**Ulisse**

Vezzoso pastorello,  
deh, sovviene un perduto  
di consiglio e d'aiuto, e dimmi pria  
di questa spiaggia,  
e questo porto il nome.

**Minerva**

Itaca è questa, in sen di questo mare,  
porto famoso e spiaggia  
felice, avventurata.  
Faccia gioconda, e grata  
a sì bel nome fai.  
Ma tu come venisti, e dove vai?

**Ulysses** (*aside*)

Heaven always succours human need.  
That young boy,  
inexperienced in deceit,  
can perhaps put my mind at rest:  
for he can have no dishonesty in his heart  
who has no hair on his chin.

**Minerva**

Youth is a lovely treasure  
that brings joy to the heart.  
Time only limps in youth,  
winged Cupid flies in its honour.  
Youth is a lovely treasure.

**Ulysses**

Gentle shepherd boy,  
oh help one who is lost  
with advice and with aid,  
and tell me first of all  
the name of this land and this harbour.

**Minerva**

This is Ithaca, in the bosom of this sea,  
a renowned harbour and  
a happy and propitious land.  
Your face lights up at such a fair name.  
But how did you come here  
and where are you going?

**Ulisse**

Io greco sono et hor di Creta io vengo  
per fuggir il castigo  
d'homicidio eseguito.  
M'accolsero i Feaci e m'han promesso  
in Elide condurmi.  
Ma dal cruccioso mar, dal vento infido  
fummo a forza cacciati in questo lido.  
Sin qui, pastor, hebbi nemico il caso.  
Ma sbarcato al riposo  
per veder quieto il mar, secondi i venti,  
colà m'addormentai sì dolcemente,  
ch'io non udii, non vidi  
de' Feaci crudeli la furtiva partenza,  
ond'io rimasi  
con le mie spoglie in su l'arena ignudo,  
isconosciuto e solo.  
E 'l sonno che partì lasciommi il duolo.

**Minerva**

Ben lungamente addormentato fosti,  
ch'ancor ombre racconti e sogni narri.  
È ben accorto Ulisse,  
ma più saggia è Minerva.  
Tu dunque, Ulisse, i miei precetti osserva.

**Ulysses**

I am a Greek and have come from Crete  
to flee punishment  
of a murder I committed.  
The Phaeacians received me and promised  
to take me to Elis,  
but we were shipwrecked on this shore  
by the angry sea and a treacherous wind.  
Fate, shepherd, has been hostile to me until now.  
But when I disembarked to rest,  
and noticing the calm sea and the favourable winds  
I fell asleep so sweetly  
that I neither saw nor heard  
the furtive departure  
of the cruel Phaeacians,  
and I was left ashore with my possessions  
naked, unknown and alone,  
and when sleep left me, it left me only grief.

**Minerva**

You have indeed slept long  
that you still speak of shadows and narrate dreams.  
Shrewd indeed is Ulysses,  
but Minerva is wiser.  
Therefore, Ulysses, follow my instructions!

**Ulisse**

Chi crederebbe mai  
le Deità vestite in human velo?  
Si fanno queste mascherate in Cielo?  
Grazie ti rendo, o protettrice Dea.  
Ben so che per tuo amore  
furon senza periglio i miei pensieri.  
Hor consolato seguo  
i tuoi saggi consigli.

**Minerva**

Incognito sarai,  
non conosciuto andrai, sin che tu vegga  
dei Proci tuoi rivali  
la sfacciata baldanza,

**Ulisse**

O fortunato Ulisse.

**Minerva**

di Penelope casta  
l'immutabil costanza.

**Ulisse**

O fortunato Ulisse.

**Minerva**

Or t'adacqua la fronte  
nella vicina fonte,  
ch'anderai sconosciuto,  
in sembiante canuto.

**Ulysses**

Whoever would have believed it!  
A deity clothed in human garb?  
Do such masquerades happen in heaven?  
I give you thanks, O protecting goddess:  
I know well that because of your love  
I have been free from danger.  
Now, comforted,  
I follow your wise counsel.

**Minerva**

You will be disguised,  
will travel unrecognised,  
until you see the shameless arrogance  
of your rivals, the suitors.

**Ulysses**

Oh fortunate Ulysses!

**Minerva**

The immutable faithfulness  
of chaste Penelope.

**Ulysses**

Oh fortunate Ulysses!

**Minerva**

Now wet your brow  
at the nearby spring,  
so that you will be unrecognizable  
in the hoary guise of an old man.



**Ulisse**

Ad obbedirti vado, indi ritorno.

**Minerva**

Io vidi per vendetta  
incenerirsi Troia, hora mi resta  
Ulisse ricondur in Patria, in Regno.  
D'un'oltraggiata Dea questo è lo sdegno.  
Quinci imparate voi, stolti mortali,  
al litigio divin non poner bocca.  
Il giudizio del Ciel a voi non tocca,  
ché son di terra i vostri tribunali.

**Ulisse** (*trasformato in un vecchio*)

Eccomi, saggia Dea.  
Questi peli che guardi  
sono di mia vecchiaia  
testimoni bugiardi.

**Minerva**

Hor poniamo in sicuro  
queste tue spoglie amate  
entro quell'antro oscuro  
delle Naiadi Ninfe al Ciel sacrate.

**Minerva, Ulisse**

Ninfe, serbate  
le gemme e gl'ori,  
spoglie e tesori,  
tutto serbate,  
Ninfe sacrate.

**Ulysses**

I shall obey you, and then return.

**Minerva**

I saw Troy burning in vengeance;  
all that remains for me to do is to lead Ulysses  
back to his homeland, to his kingdom;  
such is the anger of an offended goddess.  
Learn from this, you foolish mortals,  
not to interfere in divine disputes:  
it is not fitting for you to judge Heaven,  
for your tribunals are for Earth alone.

**Ulysses** (*transformed into an old man*)

Here I am, wise goddess.  
The hair that you see  
is deceitful witness  
to my old age.

**Minerva**

Now we shall hide  
your precious possessions  
within that dark cave  
belonging to the Nereids, the blessed nymphs.

**Minerva, Ulysses**

Nymphs, guard  
the gems and the gold,  
spoils and treasure,  
guard all,  
blessed Nymphs.

**Coro di ninfe**

Bella diva, eccoci pronte  
 al tuo cenno, al tuo voler;  
 e quest'antro, e quella fonte  
 spruzza e s'apre a tuo piacer.  
 Itaca lieta si mostra, sì,  
 al bel ritorno d'Ulisse un dì!

**8 Scena IX**

*Minerva e Ulisse mentre l'altre Ninfe portano  
 all'antro il bagaglio*

**Minerva**

Tu d'Aretusa al fonte intanto vanne,  
 ove il Pastor Eumete,  
 tuo fido antico servo,  
 custodisce la greggia. Ivi m'attendi  
 in sin che pria di Sparta io ti conduca  
 Telemaco, tuo figlio.  
 Poi d' eseguir t'appresta il mio consiglio.

**Ulisse**

O fortunato Ulisse,  
 fuggi del tuo dolor  
 l'antico error,  
 lascia il pianto,  
 dolce canto  
 dal tuo cor lieto disserra.  
 Non si disperi più mortale in terra.  
 O fortunato Ulisse,  
 cara vicenda.  
 Si può soffrir  
 hor diletto, hor martir, hor pace, hor guerra.  
 Non si disperi più mortale in terra.

**Chorus of Nymphs**

Beautiful goddess, we are  
 at your service.  
 This cavern and this spring  
 open and spout at your will.  
 Ithaca will rejoice  
 at Ulysses' return!

**Scene IX**

*Minerva, Ulysses, while the Nymphs take his  
 possessions to the cavern*

**Minerva**

Go you meanwhile to Arethusa's spring  
 where the shepherd Eumaeus,  
 your faithful old servant,  
 watches over his flocks. Wait for me there  
 while I first bring back from Sparta  
 your son, Telemachus;  
 then, prepare to carry out my instructions.

**Ulysses**

O fortunate Ulysses!  
 Abandon the pain of your  
 old misdeeds.  
 Weep no more  
 and let a gentle song  
 flow from your glad heart.  
 No more shall mortals despair on earth!  
 O fortunate Ulysses,  
 O happy fate.  
 I can endure delight, suffering,  
 peace or war.  
 No mortal on earth shall ever despair.

## 9 Scena X

*Reggia*

*Penelope, Melanto*

### **Penelope**

Donate un giorno, o dèi  
contento a' desir miei.

### **Melanto**

Cara amata regina,  
avveduta e prudente  
per tuo sol danno sei:  
men saggia io ti vorrei.  
A che sprezzi gli ardori  
dei viventi amatori  
per attender conforti  
dal cenere de' morti?  
Non fa torto chi gode a chi è sepolto.  
L'ossa del tuo marito  
estinto, incenerito,  
del tuo dolor non san poco né molto;  
e chi attende pietà da morti è stolto.  
La fede e la costanza  
son preclare virtù; le stima amante  
vivo, e non l'apprezza  
perché de' sensi privo  
un uom che fu. D'una memoria grata  
s'appagano i defunti,  
stanno i vivi coi vivi in un congiunti.  
Un bel viso fa guerra,  
il guerriero costume al morto spiace,  
ché non cercan gli estinti altro che pace.  
Lingue sotto i rigori  
de' tuoi sciapiti amori

## Scene X

*The Palace*

*Penelope, Melantho*

### **Penelope**

O gods, grant my wishes  
one day.

### **Melantho**

Dear beloved queen,  
your caution and wariness  
are damaging you alone:  
I would like you to be less judicious.  
Why do you disdain the ardour  
of living lovers  
while expecting solace  
from the ashes of the dead?  
You are not wronging the dead if you enjoy yourself.  
The bones of your husband  
who is dead, turned to ashes,  
have no knowledge of your grief; and whoever  
expects compassion from the dead is foolish.  
Faithfulness and steadiness  
are sublime virtues;  
a living lover esteems them  
but, because he has no feelings,  
a dead man cannot appreciate them.  
The dead are honoured by remembrance,  
but the living should stay with the living.  
A beautiful woman causes trouble,  
but the dead don't want to fight  
for they seek only peace.  
Your best years  
are being wasted

la più fiorita età,  
tua vedova beltà di te si duole,  
ché dentro ai lunghi pianti  
mostri sempre in acquario un sì bel sole.  
Ama dunque, ché d'amore  
dolce amica è la beltà.  
Dal piacere il tuo dolore  
saettato caderà.

### **Penelope**

Amor è un idol vano,  
è un vagabondo nume,  
all'incostanze sue non mancan piume;  
del suo dolce sereno  
è misura il baleno. Un giorno solo  
cangia il piacer in duolo.  
Sono i casi amorosi  
di' Tesei e di Giasoni ohimè son pieni  
d'incostanza e rigore,  
pene e morte e dolore,  
dell'amoroso ciel splendori fissi  
san cangiar in Giason anche gli Ulissi.

### **Melanto**

Benché Aquilone infido  
turbi una volta il mar  
distaccarsi dal lido  
animoso nocchier non dée lasciar?  
Sempre non guarda in ciel  
torva una stella,  
ha calma ogni procella.  
Ama dunque, ché d'amore  
dolce amica è la beltà.

in mourning,  
your widowed beauty bemoans that,  
through continual weeping,  
you always hide your beauty behind a veil of tears.  
So love; for beauty  
is love's sweet companion.  
Your grief will be pierced  
by pleasure's arrows.

### **Penelope**

Cupid is a useless idol,  
a gadabout god,  
whose fickleness is well known;  
his sweet calm  
is fleeting. Joy can turn  
to grief in one day.  
Romances like those  
of Theseus and Jason are full  
of fickleness and strictness,  
torment and death and grief.  
The stars of an amorous heaven  
could make even Ulysses behave like Jason.

### **Melantho**

Just because treacherous storms  
disturb the sea at times,  
should the bold mariner  
never leave harbour?  
The stars will not always  
be contrary;  
calm follows every storm.  
So love; for beauty  
is love's sweet companion.

Dal piacere il tuo dolore  
saettato caderà.

**Penelope**

Non dée di nuovo amar  
chi misera penò:  
torna stolta a penar  
chi prima errò.

**Scena XI**

*Eumete*

**Eumete**

Come mal si salva un regio ammanto  
da sventure e da mali.  
Meglio scettri regali  
che dardi de' pastor imperla il pianto.  
Seta vestono ed ori  
i travagli maggiori.  
È vita più sicura  
della ricca ed illustre  
la povera ed oscura.  
Colli, campagne e boschi,  
se stato human felicità contiene,  
in voi s'annida il sospirato bene.  
Herbosi prati, in voi  
nasce il fior del diletto,  
frutto di libertade in voi si coglie,  
son delizie dell'huom le vostre foglie.

Your grief will be pierced  
by pleasure's arrows.

**Penelope**

Never again should anyone love  
who has suffered so bitterly:  
it is foolish to  
repeat one's mistakes.

**Scene XI**

*Eumaeus*

**Eumaeus**

A king's mantle cannot protect  
from misadventure and evil!  
Tears bedew royal scepters more often  
than shepherds' staffs.  
The greatest sufferings  
are clad in silk and gold.  
And more secure  
than the rich and illustrious life  
is the poor and obscure one.  
Hills, fields and woods,  
if the human state contains happiness,  
it is in you that it nests.  
Grassy meadows, in you  
the flower of delight is born,  
the fruit of liberty is gathered from you,  
your leaves are man's delight.

## 11 Scena XII

*Iro, Eumete*

**Iro**

Pastor d'armenti può  
prati e boschi lodar,  
avvezzo nelle mandre a conversar.  
Quest'herbe che tu nomini  
sono cibo di bestie e non degli huomini.  
Colà tra Regi io sto,  
tu fra gl'armenti qui.  
Tu godi e tu conversi tutto 'l dì  
amicizie selvatiche,  
io mangio i tuoi compagni,  
pastor, e le tue pratiche.

**Eumete**

Iro, gran mangiatore,  
Iro, divoratore,  
Iro, loquace,  
mia pace non perturbar.  
Corri, corri a mangiar,  
corri, corri a crepar.

## 12 Scena XIII

*Eumete, poi Ulisse in sembianza di vecchio*

**Eumete**

Ulisse generoso.  
Fu nobile intrapresa  
lo spopolar, l'incenerir cittadi.  
Ma forse il Ciel irato,  
nella caduta del Troiano regno,

## Scene XII

*Irus, Eumaeus*

**Irus**

A keeper of sheep  
can well praise meadows and woods,  
for he is used to talking to the flock.  
These herbs you have mentioned  
are fodder for cattle, and not for man.  
I live there among kings,  
you here among the cattle.  
You spend your days enjoying  
and cultivating rustic friendships,  
I eat your friends,  
shepherd, and your work!

**Eumaeus**

Irus, you big eater,  
Irus, you glutton,  
Irus, you windbag!  
do not disturb my peace.  
Run away to eat!  
Run away and die!

## Scene XIII

*Eumaeus, then Ulysses disguised as an old man*

**Eumaeus**

Generous Ulysses!  
Ransacking and incinerating cities  
were noble deeds.  
But perhaps heaven,  
enraged at the demise of the Trojan kingdom,

volle la vita tua  
per vittima al suo sdegno.

**Ulisse**

Se del nomato Ulisse tu vegga in questo giorno  
desiato il ritorno,  
accogli questo vecchio  
povero, ch'a perduto  
ogni mortal aiuto  
nella cadente età, nell'aspra sorte.  
Gli sia la tua pietà scorta alla morte.

**Eumete**

Hospite mio sarai,  
cortese albergo avrai.  
Sono i mendici  
favoriti del Ciel, di Giove amici.

**Ulisse**

Ulisse, Ulisse è vivo.  
La patria lo vedrà,  
Penelope l'avrà.  
Ch'il fato non fu mai d'affetto privo.  
Maturano il destin le sue dimore,  
credilo a me, pastore.

**Eumete**

Come lieto t'accoglio,  
mendica deità.  
Il mio lungo cordoglio  
da te vinto cadrà.  
Seguimi, amico, pur.  
Riposo avrai sicur.

demanded your life  
as a sacrifice to its anger.

**Ulysses**

If today you wish  
the return of the said Ulysses,  
take in this poor old man  
who has lost  
everything  
in his dotage, down on his luck.  
May your compassion sustain him until his death.

**Eumaeus**

You will be my guest,  
you will be welcome.  
The beggars are  
favoured by Heaven, friends of Jupiter.

**Ulysses**

Ulysses is alive!  
His homeland will see him,  
Penelope will embrace him;  
for fate was never insensitive.  
Time can change much;  
believe me, shepherd!

**Eumaeus**

How happily I welcome you,  
blessed beggar!  
My long sorrow  
will be assuaged by you.  
Now follow me, friend;  
you will rest in safety.

CD2<sup>Act 2</sup>



## ATTO 2

### 1 Sinfonia

### 2 Scena I

*Telemaco e Minerva sul carro*

#### **Telemaco**

Lieto cammino,  
dolce viaggio.  
Passa il carro divino  
come che fosse un raggio.

#### **Minerva, Telemaco** (*a due*)

Gli Dei possenti  
navigan l'aure,  
solcano i venti.

#### **Minerva**

Eccoti giunto alle paterne ville,  
Telemaco prudente.  
Non ti scordar giammai de' miei consigli,  
ché se dal buon sentier devia la mente,  
incontrerai perigli.

#### **Telemaco**

Periglio invan mi sgrida  
se tua bontà m'affida.

## ACT 2

### Sinfonia

### Scene I

*Telemachus and Minerva travelling by chariot*

#### **Telemachus**

Delightful travels,  
sweet journey,  
the divine chariot rushes  
as if it were a ray of light.

#### **Minerva, Telemachus**

The mighty gods  
sail on the breezes,  
plough the winds.

#### **Minerva**

You have arrived in your father's domains,  
wise Telemachus.  
Never forget my advice,  
for if your thoughts stray from the right path  
you will meet with dangers.

#### **Telemachus**

Danger will try in vain to rebuke me  
if you grant me your benevolence.

### 3 Scena II

*Eumete, Ulisse, Telemaco*

#### **Eumete**

O gran figlio d'Ulisse.  
È pur ver che tu torni  
a serenar della tua madre i giorni.  
E pur sei giunto al fine  
di tua casa cadente  
a riparar l'altissime ruine.  
Fugga il cordoglio,  
fugga, e cessi il pianto.  
Facciam, o peregrino,  
all'allegrezze nostre honor col canto.

#### **Eumete, Ulisse**

Verdi piagge, al lieto giorno  
rabbellite herbe, e fiori,  
scherzin l'aure con gli amori,  
ride il ciel al bel ritorno.

#### **Telemaco**

Vostri cortesi auspici a me son grati.  
Manchevole piacer però m'alletta,  
ch'esser paga non puote alma ch'aspetta.

#### **Eumete**

Questo che tu qui miri,  
sopra gli homeri stanchi  
portar gran peso d'anni, e mal involto  
da ben laceri panni, egli m'accerta  
che d'Ulisse il ritorno  
fia di poco lontan da questo giorno.

### Scene II

*Eumaeus, Ulysses, Telemachus*

#### **Eumaeus**

O great son of Ulysses,  
it is true you return  
to bring cheer to your mother's life.  
And also you have finally returned  
to repair the huge ravages  
of your crumbling home.  
Let sorrow flee  
and lamenting come to an end.  
Let us, o wanderer,  
honour our happiness with our singing.

#### **Eumaeus, Ulysses**

Herbs and flowers adorn this land  
on this propitious day.  
The breezes shall play with the cupids,  
heaven smiles at the joyous return.

#### **Telemachus**

I am thankful for your friendly wishes.  
But it is an incomplete pleasure that charms me,  
for a soul that is waiting cannot be satisfied.

#### **Eumaeus**

This man whom you see here,  
bearing a great weight of years  
on his weary shoulders,  
and poorly clad in torn garments,  
assures me that the return of Ulysses  
is imminent.

**Ulisse**

Pastor, se nol fia ver, ch'al tardo passo  
 si trasformi in sepolcro il primo sasso,  
 e la morte, che meco amoreggia d'intorno,  
 hora porti a miei di l'ultimo giorno.

**Eumete, Ulisse**

Dolce speme i cor lusinga,  
 lieto annunzio ogn'alma alletta,  
 s'esser paga non puote alma ch'aspetta.

**Telemaco**

Vanne pur tu veloce,  
 vanne, Eumete, alla reggia, e del mio arrivo  
 fa' ch'avvisata sia  
 la genitrice mia.

**4 Scena III**

*Telemaco, Ulisse*

*Scende dal Cielo un raggio di foco, onde s'apre  
 la terra e Ulisse si sprofonda.*

**Telemaco**

Che veggio, oimé, che miro?  
 Questa terra vorace i vivi inghiotte,  
 apre bocche e caverne  
 d'humano sangue ingorde, e più non soffre  
 di viator il passo,  
 ma la carne dell'huom trangiote il sasso.  
 Che prodigi son questi?  
 Dunque, Patria, apprendesti  
 a divorar le genti?  
 Rispondono anche ai vivi i monumenti?

**Ulysses**

Shepherd, should this not be the truth, let the first  
 stone my weary foot meets turn into a grave,  
 and let death, who is courting me,  
 bring my life to an end.

**Eumaeus, Ulysses**

Sweet hope lures the heart,  
 happy news charms every soul,  
 yet a soul that is waiting cannot be satisfied.

**Telemachus**

Go quickly,  
 go, Eumaeus, to the palace,  
 and see that my mother is informed  
 of my arrival.

**Scene III**

*Telemachus, Ulysses*

*A thunderbolt strikes from the Heavens, the earth  
 opens and swallows Ulysses*

**Telemachus**

What do I witness, alas, what do I behold?  
 This voracious earth devours the living,  
 it opens mouths and caverns,  
 greedy for human blood, and no longer endures  
 the step of a wayfarer,  
 but stone swallows the flesh of man.  
 What wonders are these?  
 Did you then learn, O fatherland,  
 how to devour people?  
 Do stones dispute with the living?

Così, dunque, Minerva  
alla Patria mi doni?  
Quest'è Patria comune,  
se di questo ragioni.  
Ma se presta ho la lingua,  
ho la memoria pigra.  
Quel pellegrin c'hor hora,  
per dar fede a menzogne  
chiamò sepolcri et invitò la morte,  
dal giusto Ciel punito  
restò qui seppellito. Ah, caro Padre,  
dunque in modo sì strano  
m'avvisa il tuo morire  
il Ciel di propria mano?  
Ahi, che per farmi guerra  
fa stupori e miracoli la terra.

*(Qui risorge Ulisse in sua propria forma.)*

Ma che nuovi portenti, oimé, rimiro?  
Fa cambio, fa permùta  
con la morte la vita?  
Non sia più chi più chiami  
questa caduta amara,  
se col morir ringiovanir s'impara.

### **Ulisse**

Telemaco, convienti  
cangiar le meraviglie in allegrezze,  
ché se perdi il mendico, il padre acquisti.

Is this why you return me  
to my homeland, Minerva?  
This is our joint homeland,  
if you remember.  
But while my tongue is quick,  
my memory is sluggish.  
This wanderer who just now,  
to give credibility to his lies,  
invoked tombs and invited death,  
has been punished by a just heaven  
and lies buried here. Ah, beloved father!  
Thus, in such a strange manner,  
does heaven itself  
inform me of your death?  
Ah, in order to wage war on me  
earth performs wonders and miracles!

*(Here Ulysses rises again in his own guise)*

But what new prodigy, alas, do I behold?  
Death is altered,  
transformed into life!  
No more shall this demise  
be called harsh,  
if in dying one can be rejuvenated.

### **Ulysses**

Telemachus,  
you should change your wonderment into joy,  
for if you lose the beggar you gain your father.

**Telemaco**

Benché Ulisse si vanti  
 di prosapia celeste,  
 trasformarsi non puote huomo mortale.  
 Tanto Ulisse non vale.  
 O scherzano gli Dei,  
 o pur mago tu sei.

**Ulisse**

Ulisse, Ulisse sono.  
 Testimonio è Minerva,  
 quella che te portò per l'aria a volo.  
 La forma cangia a me come le aggrada,  
 perché sicuro e sconosciuto io vada.

**Telemaco, Ulisse**

O padre sospirato,  
 O figlio desiato,  
 genitor glorioso,  
 pegno dolce amoroso,  
 t'inchino, o mio diletto.  
 ti stringo.  
 Filiale dolcezza  
 Paterna tenerezza  
 a lagrimar mi sforza.  
 il pianto in me rinforza.  
 Mortal, tutto confida e tutto spera,  
 ché quando il Ciel protegge,  
 Natura non ha legge.  
 L'impossibile ancor spesso s'avvera.

**Telemachus**

Although Ulysses  
 descends from divine ancestry,  
 no human is able to transform himself;  
 Ulysses is not so powerful.  
 Either the gods are jesting,  
 or you are a magician!

**Ulysses**

I am indeed Ulysses!  
 Minerva is my witness,  
 she who carried you, flying, through the air.  
 She changes my appearance as she wishes  
 so that I may travel safely and go unrecognized.

**Telemachus, Ulysses**

O longed for father!  
 O desired son!  
 Glorious parent!  
 Sweet embodiment of love!  
 I bow before you, oh my joy,  
 I embrace you.  
 Filial tenderness  
 Paternal tenderness  
 brings me to tears.  
 makes me weep.  
 Oh man, trust and hope,  
 for when heaven protects you,  
 nature has no jurisdiction;  
 the impossible can often come true.

**Ulisse**

Vanne alla madre, va'.  
 Porta alla reggia il piè.  
 Sarò tosto con te,  
 ma pria canuto il pel ritornerà.

**5 Scena IV**

*Reggia*

*Melanto, Eurimaco*

**Melanto**

Eurimaco, la donna,  
 insomma, ha un cor di sasso.  
 Parola non la muove,  
 priego invan la combatte.  
 Dentro del mar d'amore  
 sempre tenace ha l'anima.  
 O di fede, o d'orgoglio,  
 in ogni modo è scoglio.  
 Nemica, o pur amante,  
 non ha di cera il cor, ma di diamante.

**Eurimaco**

E pur udii sovente  
 la poetica schiera  
 cantar donna volubile e leggiera.

**Melanto**

Ho speso invan parole, indarno prieghi  
 per condur la Regina a nuovi amori.  
 L'impresa è disperata,  
 odia, non ch   l'amar, l'esser amata.

**Ulysses**

Go to your mother, go!  
 Make haste to the royal palace!  
 I will soon be with you,  
 but first I must become an old man again.

**Scene IV**

*The palace*

*Melantho, Eurymachus*

**Melantho**

Eurymachus, that woman  
 has a heart of stone.  
 Words do not move her;  
 I implored her in vain;  
 she has hardened her soul  
 in her lovesickness;  
 whether through faithfulness or through pride  
 she is like a rock in every way.  
 As an enemy or as a lover  
 she has a heart not like wax but like diamond.

**Eurymachus**

And yet I have often heard  
 poets singing of  
 fickle and shallow women.

**Melantho**

I have wasted words, begged her in vain  
 trying to guide the queen to new loves.  
 It is a hopeless endeavour:  
 she hates being loved as much as loving.

**Eurimaco**

Peni chi brama,  
 stenti chi vuol,  
 goda fra l'ombre  
 chi ha in odio il sol.

**Melanto**

Penelope trionfa  
 nella doglia e nel pianto.  
 Fra piaceri e contenti  
 vive lieta Melanto:  
 ella in pene si nutre, io fra dilette  
 amando mi giocondo.  
 Fra sì varii pensier più bello è il mondo.

**Eurimaco**

Godendo, ridendo  
 si lacera il duol.

**Melanto**

Amiamo, godiamo  
 e dica chi vuol.

**6 Scena V**

*Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro, Penelope*

**Antinoo**

Sono l'altre Regine  
 coronate de' servi e tu d'amanti.  
 Tributan questi Regi  
 al mar di tua bellezza un mar di pianti.

**Eurymachus**

Those who love will suffer,  
 those who desire will find difficulties.  
 Whoever hates the sun  
 should find pleasure in the shadows.

**Melantho**

Penelope is majestic  
 in her grief and weeping.  
 Melantho lives happily  
 between pleasures and joy.  
 She nourishes herself with pain,  
 I amuse myself in the delights of love.  
 The world is more beautiful because it is so varied.

**Eurymachus**

Enjoying, laughing,  
 sorrow is destroyed.

**Melantho**

Let us love, let us take pleasure,  
 whatever others say.

**Scene V**

*Antinous, Amphinomus, Peisander, Penelope*

**Antinous**

Other queens are  
 surrounded by servants and you by lovers.  
 These kings pay tribute  
 to the sea of your beauty with a sea of tears.

**Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro**

Ama dunque, sì, sì,  
dunque riama un dì.

**Penelope**

Non voglio amar, no, no,  
ch'amando penerò.

**Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro** (*a tre*)

Ama dunque, sì, sì,  
dunque riama un dì.

**Penelope**

Cari tanto mi siete  
quanto più ardenti ardete.  
Ma non m'appresso all'amoroso gioco  
che lunge è bel più che vicino il foco.  
Non voglio amar, no, no,  
ch'amando penerò.

**Anfinomo**

La pampinosa vite  
se non s'abbraccia al faggio  
l'autun non frutta e non fiorisce il maggio.  
E se sfiorita resta  
ogni mano la coglie,  
ogni piè la calpesta.

**Antinous, Peisander, Amphinomus**

Love then, yes, yes,  
love again one day.

**Penelope**

I do not want to love, no,  
for if I love I will suffer.

**Antinous, Peisander, Amphinomus**

Love then, yes, yes,  
love again one day.

**Penelope**

You are more charming  
the more your ardour inflames you;  
but I will not enter the game of love,  
for fire is more beautiful when distant than when near.  
I do not want to love, no,  
for if I love I will suffer.

**Amphinomus**

The leafy vine,  
if it does not embrace the tree,  
will not bear fruit in autumn or flower in May,  
and if it does not flower  
every hand will gather it,  
every foot will trample it.



**Pisandro**

Il bel cedro odoroso  
vive, se non s'incalma,  
senza frutto, spinoso.  
Ma se s'innesta poi  
figliano frutti e fior gli spini suoi.

**Antinoo**

L'edera che verdeggia,  
ad onta anco del verno  
d'un bel smeraldo eterno,  
se non s'appoggia perde  
tra l'herbose ruine il suo bel verde.

**Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro**

Ama dunque, sì, sì,  
dunque riama un dì.

**Penelope**

Non voglio amar, non voglio.  
Come sta in dubbio un ferro  
se fra due calamite  
da due parti diverse egli è chiamato,  
così sta in forse il core  
nel tripartito Amore.  
Ma non può amar chi non sa, chi non può  
che pianger e penar.  
Mestitia e dolor  
son crudeli nemici d'Amor.

**Peisander**

The beautiful, fragrant cedar  
is, if not grafted,  
barren and thorny;  
but when grafted  
its thorns bring forth fruit and flowers.

**Antinous**

The ivy that is green even in winter  
with a beautiful  
eternal emerald colour  
if not supported, will lose  
its beautiful green amidst the grassy ruins.

**Antinous, Peisander, Amphinomus**

Love then, yes, yes,  
love again one day!

**Penelope**

I don't want to love, no!  
Just as a piece of iron  
between two magnets,  
is pulled in two different directions,  
my heart cannot decide  
among three lovers.  
But nobody can love when they know nothing  
but tears and suffering.  
Sadness and grief  
are the worst enemies of love.

## 7 Scena VI

**Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo** (*a tre*)

All'allegrezze dunque, al ballo, al canto.  
Rallegram la Regina.  
Lieto cor ad amar tosto s'inchina.

**Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo, Coro**

Balliamo che l'onde  
al vento che spira  
le move e l'aggira  
le spinge e confonde  
si come lor fiede  
se movon il piede  
e ballan le linfe  
quai garuli Ninfe.  
Balliam che i vezzosi  
bei fior rugiadosi  
se l'aura li scuote  
con urti e con ruote  
fan vaga sembianza  
anch'essi di danza.  
Balliamo e giriamo  
corriamo e saltiamo  
qual cosa è più degna  
il ballo c'insegna.

## 8 Scena VII

*Eumete, Penelope*

**Eumete**

Apportator d'alte novelle vengo.  
È giunto, o gran Regina,  
Telemaco tuo Figlio,

## Scene VI

**Antinous, Peisander, Amphinomus**

Then to enjoyments, to the dance, to song!  
Let us cheer the queen.  
A gay heart falls in love easily.

**Antinous, Peisander, Amphinomus, Chorus**

Let's dance as the waves  
as the blowing wind  
drives and turns them  
pushes and swirls them  
as it stops them  
when they move  
and the waters dance  
like chattering Nymphs.  
Let's dance as the beautiful  
dewy flowers  
as the breeze stirs  
they too seem to dance  
turning and shaking.  
Let's dance and spin  
rush and bound  
dancing teaches us  
what is most worthy.

## Scene VII

*Eumaeus, Penelope*

**Eumaeus**

I come bearing important tidings:  
great queen, Telemachus your son,  
has just arrived,

e forse non fia vana  
la speme ch'io t'arreco.  
Ulisse, il nostro Rege,  
il tuo consorte, è vivo,  
e speriam non lontano  
il suo bramato arrivo.

**Penelope**

Per sì dubbie novelle  
o s'addoppia il mio male,  
o si cangia il tenor delle mie stelle.

**9 Scena VIII**

*Antinoo, Anfinomo, Pisandro, Eurimaco*

**Antinoo**

Compagni, udiste? Il nostro  
vicin rischio mortale  
vi chiama a grandi e risolte imprese.  
Telemaco ritorna, e forse Ulisse.  
Questa reggia da voi  
violata, ed offesa,  
dal suo signor aspetta  
tarda, bensì, ma prossima vendetta.  
Chi d'oltraggiar fu ardito,  
neghittoso non resti  
in compir il delitto. In sin ad hora  
fu il peccato dolcezza.  
Hora il vostro peccar fia sicurezza,  
che lo sperar favori è gran pazzia  
da chi s'offese pria.

and perhaps I am not  
raising your hope in vain:  
Ulysses our king,  
your husband, is alive,  
and we hope his awaited return  
is not far off!

**Penelope**

Such uncertain tidings  
will either redouble my grief  
or change my fate.

**Scene VIII**

*Antinous, Amphinomus, Peisander, Eurymachus*

**Antinous**

Friends, did you hear?  
Our impending mortal danger  
must spur you to great and resolute deeds!  
Telemachus is returning, and perhaps Ulysses.  
This palace, violated  
and disrespected by you,  
awaits from its master  
belated but imminent vengeance.  
He who had the temerity to offend,  
should not be slow in  
completing his crime. Up till now  
transgression was pleasant.  
Now your crime is certainty  
that it would be great foolishness  
to hope for mercy from one  
who was affronted in the past.

**Pisandro, Anfinomo**

N'han fatto l'opre nostre  
 inimici d'Ulisse.  
 L'oltraggiar l'inimico unqua disdisse.

**Antinoo**

Dunque l'ardir s'accresca,  
 e pria ch'Ulisse arrivi  
 Telemaco vicin togliam dai vivi.

**Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo**

Sì, sì, de' grand'amori  
 sono figli i gran sdegni.  
 Quel fere i cori e quest'abbatte i regni.

*(Qui vola sopra 'l capo dei Proci un'Aquila.)*

**Eurimaco**

Chi dall'alto n'ascolta,  
 hor ne risponde, amici.  
 Mute lingue del Ciel sono gli auspici.  
 Mirate, oimé, mirate  
 del gran Giove l'augello  
 ne predice ruine,  
 ne promette flagello.  
 Muova al delitto il piede,  
 chi giusto il Ciel non crede.

**Anfinomo, Pisandro, Antinoo**

Crediam al minacciar del Ciel irato,  
 ché, chi non teme il Cielo  
 raddoppia il suo peccato.

**Amphinomus, Peisander**

Our deeds have made us  
 enemies of Ulysses.  
 Offence to the enemy cannot be undone.

**Antinous**

Then let our courage grow stronger,  
 and before Ulysses arrives  
 let us kill Telemachus!

**Amphinomus, Peisander, Antinous**

Yes, yes, great loves  
 engender great anger,  
 the former wound the heart, the latter destroys  
 kingdoms.

*(Here an eagle flies over the suitors' heads.)*

**Eurymachus**

He who listens from on high  
 now answers, friends!  
 The omens are mute messages of heaven.  
 Behold, alas, behold  
 the eagle of great Jupiter,  
 it predicts ruin,  
 it promises punishment!  
 It would be wrong  
 not to believe that Heaven is just.

**Amphinomus, Peisander, Antinous**

We believe the threats of irate heaven,  
 for whoever does not fear heaven  
 doubles his sin.

**Antinoo**

Dunque, prima che giunga  
 il filial soccorso,  
 per abbatter quel core,  
 facciam ai doni almen grato ricorso,  
 perch'ha la punta d'or lo stral d'Amore.

**Eurimaco**

L'oro sol, l'oro sia  
 l'amorosa magia.  
 Ogni cor femminil, se fosse pietra,  
 tocco dall'or si spetra.

**Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo**

Amor è un'armonia,  
 sono canti i sospiri,  
 ma non si canta ben se l'or non suona.  
 Non ama chi non dona.

**Scena IX**

*Ulisse, Minerva*

**Ulisse**

Perir non può chi tien per scorta il Cielo,  
 chi ha per compagno un Dio.  
 A grand'impresè, è ver, volto son io.  
 Ma fa peccato grave  
 chi difeso dal Ciel il mondo pave.

**Antinous**

Therefore, before her son  
 arrives to help her,  
 let us, in order to win this heart,  
 at least appeal to her with gifts,  
 for Cupid's arrow has a tip of gold.

**Eurymachus**

Let gold alone be  
 Love's enchantment.  
 Every woman's heart, even of stone,  
 melts when touched by gold.

**Amphinomus, Peisander, Antinous**

Love is harmony, sighs are melodies,  
 but one does not sing well  
 if gold does not accompany:  
 he does not love who does not give presents.

**Scene IX**

*Ulysses, Minerva*

**Ulysses**

Whoever has a god as his companion  
 and Heaven as his guide cannot perish.  
 I am indeed about to carry out great deeds.  
 But a man protected by Heaven  
 makes a grave mistake if he fears the world.

**Minerva**

O coraggioso Ulisse.  
 lo farò che proponga  
 la tua casta consorte  
 giuoco che a te fia gloria  
 e sicurezza e vittoria e a Proci morte.  
 Allor che l'arco tuo ti giunge in mano  
 e strepitoso tuon fiero t'invita,  
 saetta pur ch  la tua destra ardita  
 tutti conficcher  gli estinti al piano.  
 lo star  teco, e con celeste lampo  
 atterrer  l'humanit  soggetta.  
 Cadran vittime tutti alla vendetta,  
 ch  i flagelli del Ciel non hanno scampo.

**Ulisse**

Sempre   cieco il mortale.  
 Ma allor si d e pi  cieco  
 chi 'l precetto divin devoto osserva.  
 lo ti seguo, Minerva.

**11 Scena X**

*Eumete, Ulisse*

**Eumete**

lo vidi, o pelegrin, de' Proci amanti  
 l'ardir infermarsi,  
 l'ardore gelar,  
 negli occhi tremanti  
 il cor palpar.  
 Il nome sol d'Ulisse  
 quell'alme ree trafisse.

**Minerva**

O brave Ulysses,  
 I shall make sure that  
 your chaste consort proposes  
 a contest which will bring you glory  
 and sure victory as well as death to the suitors.  
 When your bow reaches your hand  
 and resounding thunder summons you,  
 then shoot, so that your bold right hand  
 plunges all the dead to the ground.  
 I will remain with you and with celestial lightning  
 will fell the vanquished men:  
 they will all fall victim to your vengeance,  
 for Heaven's wrath cannot be escaped!

**Ulysses**

Man is always blind.  
 But more blind must he be  
 who follows divine orders.  
 I follow you, Minerva.

**Scene X**

*Eumaeus, Ulysses*

**Eumaeus**

I saw, o wanderer, the amorous suitors  
 losing their boldness,  
 the ardour cooling  
 in their trembling eyes,  
 I saw their fear.  
 The name of Ulysses alone  
 pierced those guilty souls.

**Ulisse**

Godo anch'io, né so come,  
rido né so perché.  
Tutto gioisco, ringiovanisco,  
ben lieto affé.

**Eumete**

Tosto c'havrem con povera sostanza  
i corpi invigoriti, andrem veloci.  
Vedrai di quei feroci  
fieri i costumi, i gesti  
impudichi, inhonesti.

**Ulisse**

Non vive eterna l'arroganza in terra,  
la superbia mortal tosto s'abbatte,  
ch'il fulmine del Ciel gli Olimpi atterra.

**12 Scena XI**

*Reggia*

*Telemaco, Penelope*

**Telemaco**

Del mio lungo viaggio i torti errori  
già vi narrai, Regina.  
Hora tacer non posso  
della veduta Greca  
la bellezza divina.  
M'accolse Helena bella,  
io mirando stupii,  
dentro a quei raggi immerso,  
che di Paridi pieno  
non fosse l'universo.  
Alla Figlia di Leda

**Ulysses**

I too rejoice, but don't know how;  
I laugh, not knowing why.  
I am overjoyed,  
rejuvenated by such happiness.

**Eumaeus**

As soon as we have fortified  
our bodies with a frugal meal, we shall make haste.  
You will see the haughty manner  
and the immodest and corrupt customs  
of those savages.

**Ulysses**

Arrogance will not be allowed on earth forever;  
human arrogance is soon cut down,  
for celestial thunderbolts overthrow rulers.

**Scene XI**

*The palace*

*Telemachus, Penelope*

**Telemachus**

I have already narrated to you, O queen,  
the tortuous wanderings of my long journey.  
Now I can no longer be silent  
about the divine beauty  
of the Greek woman I saw.  
Beautiful Helen received me;  
I gazed at her wondering,  
as I plunged into those eyes,  
at how could the whole universe  
not be full of Parises;  
one Paris alone, I said,

un sol Paride, dissi,  
è poca preda.  
Povere fur le stragi,  
furon lievi gl'incendi a tanto foco.  
Ché se non arde un mondo, il resto è poco.  
Io vidi in que' begl'occhi  
dell'incendio troiano  
le nascenti scintille,  
le bambine faville.  
E ben prima potea,  
astrologo amoroso,  
da quei giri di foco  
profetar fiamme e indovinar ardori  
da incenerir città non men che cori,  
Paride, è ver, morì.  
Paride ancor gioì.  
Con la vita pagar convenne l'onta,  
ma così gran piacere  
una morte non sconta.  
Si perdoni a quell'alma il grave fallo.  
La bella Greca porta  
nel suo volto beato  
tutte le scuse del troian peccato.

### **Penelope**

Beltà troppo funesta, ardor iniquo  
di rimembranza indegno,  
disseminò lo sdegno  
non tra i fiori d'un volto,  
ma fra i strisci d'un angue.  
Ché mostro è quell'amor che nuota in sangue.  
Memoria così trista  
disperda pur l'oblio.

is too small a conquest  
for Leda's daughter.  
The massacres were inadequate,  
the blazes inadequate to such ardour.  
Anything less than the whole world  
burning for her, is not enough.  
I saw in those beautiful eyes  
the first sparks and the kindling flames  
of Troy's blaze.  
Any astrologer who had gazed  
into those fiery eyes  
could have predicted the flames  
and prophesied the ardour  
that could incinerate cities as well as hearts.  
Paris died, it is true,  
yet Paris knew joy.  
He fittingly paid for the affront with his life,  
but such great joy  
is not atoned with one death alone.  
Let that soul be pardoned its grave offence:  
the beautiful Greek woman  
carries in her blissful face  
all the reasons for the Trojan shame.

### **Penelope**

Too baleful beauty, iniquitous passion  
unworthy of remembrance,  
which sowed indignation  
not through a beautiful face  
but through the coils of a serpent;  
a love swimming in blood is monstrous.  
Let such a tragic memory  
be dispelled by oblivion.



Vaneggia la tua mente,  
folleggia il tuo desio.

**Telemaco**

Non per vana follia  
Helena ti nomai, ma perché essendo  
nella famosa Sparta  
circondato, improvviso,  
dal volo d'un augel destro e felice,  
Helena, ch'è maestra  
dell'indovine scienze e degl'augúri,  
tutta allegra mi disse  
ch'era vicino Ulisse, e che dovea  
dar morte ai Proci e stabilirsi il Regno.

**Scena XII**

*Cortile regio dove si prepara un convito  
Antinoo, Eumete, Iro, Ulisse, e detti*

**Antinoo**

Sempre, villano Eumete,  
sempre t'ingegni  
di perturbar la pace,  
d'intorbidar la gioia,  
oggetto di dolore,  
ritrovator di noia.  
Hai qui condotto un infesto mendico,  
un noioso importuno,  
che con sue voglie ingorde  
non farà che guastar le menti liete.

Your mind is raving,  
your emotions are folly!

**Telemachus**

Not for pointless folly  
did I mention Helen to you,  
but because, while I was in renowned Sparta,  
an agile and propitious bird  
suddenly circled above.  
Helen, who is well versed  
in occult science and in omens,  
joyfully informed me  
that Ulysses was near and that he would  
bring death to the suitors and restore his kingdom.

**Scene XII**

*Palace courtyard, where a banquet is being  
prepared. Antinous, Eumaeus, Irus, Ulysses*

**Antinous**

Eumaeus, you lout,  
you always manage  
to find ways to disturb our peace,  
to spoil our pleasure,  
you are a pain, a troublemaker.  
You have brought here  
an infested beggar,  
an annoying intruder  
who, with his greedy cravings,  
will do nothing but ruin our happy mood.

**Eumete**

L'ha condotto Fortuna  
alle case d'Ulisse,  
ove pietà s'aduna.

**Antinoo**

Rimanga ei teco a custodir la gregge,  
e qui non venga, dove  
civile nobiltà comanda e regge.

**Eumete**

Civile nobiltà non è crudele,  
né puote anima grande sdegnar pietà,  
che nasce de' regi tra le fasce.

**Antinoo**

Arrogante plebeo.  
Insegnar opre eccelse  
a te, vil huom, non tocca,  
né dêe parlar di Re villana bocca.  
E tu, pìcaro indegno,  
fuggi da questo regno.

**Iro**

Pàrtiti, movi il piè.  
Se sei qui per mangiar  
son pria di te.

**Ulisse**

Huomo di grosso taglio,  
di larga prospettiva,  
benché canuto ed invecchiato sia,  
non è vile però l'anima mia.  
Se tanto mi concede l'alta bontà regale,

**Eumaeus**

Fortune has led him  
to the house of Ulysses,  
where compassion lives.

**Antinous**

Let him stay with you guarding the flocks  
and don't bring him here  
where urbane nobility rules.

**Eumaeus**

Urbane nobility is not cruel;  
the powerful cannot scorn compassion,  
with which kings are endowed at birth.

**Antinous**

Arrogant plebeian!  
A worthless man like you  
should not preach;  
a peasant's mouth should not talk of kings.  
And you, unworthy vagabond,  
leave this kingdom!

**Irus**

Leave, move your feet!  
If you are here in order to eat,  
I was here before you.

**Ulysses**

O man of the huge girth,  
of large bulk,  
although hoary and aged  
my soul is not cowardly.  
If royalty's great generosity permits,

trarrò il corpaccio tuo sotto 'l mio piede,  
mostruoso animale.

**Iro**

E che sì, rimbambito guerriero,  
vecchio importuno, e che sì, che ti strappo  
i peli della barba ad uno, ad uno.

**Ulisse**

Voglio perder la vita  
se di forza e di vaglia  
io non ti vinco or or, sacco di paglia.

**Antinoo**

Vediam, Regina, in questa bella coppia  
d'una lotta di braccia stravagante duello.

**Telemaco**

Il campo io t'assicuro,  
pelegrin sconosciuto.

**Iro**

Anch'io ti do franchigia,  
combattitor non barbuto.

**Ulisse**

La gran disfida accetto,  
cavaliero panciuto.

**Iro** *(che fa alla lotta)*

Su, su, dunque, su, su,  
alla ciuffa, alla lotta, su, su.

I shall trample your gross body under my feet,  
you monstrous animal!

**Irus**

And you, senile warrior  
old troublemaker, what if  
I pluck out the hairs of your beard one by one!

**Ulysses**

I wish to die  
if I am not stronger and more courageous than you,  
you sack of straw!

**Antinous**

Let's watch, O queen, a grotesque wrestling match  
between this handsome couple.

**Telemachus**

I give you permission,  
unknown wanderer.

**Irus**

And I give you leave,  
beardless fighter.

**Ulysses**

I accept the challenge,  
fat knight!

**Irus** *(preparing to wrestle)*

Now then!  
To the fight, let's wrestle!

*(Segue la lotta nella quale dopo breve contrasto  
Ulisse atterra Iro.)*

Son vinto, oimé.

**Antinoo**

Tu, vincitor, perdona  
a chi si chiama vinto.  
Iro, puoi ben mangiar, ma non lottar.

**Penelope**

Valoroso mendico, in corte resta,  
onorato e sicuro,  
ché non è sempre vile  
chi veste manto povero ed oscuro.

**Scena XIII**

*Pisandro e Anfinomo sopraggiungono*

**Pisandro**

Generosa Regina,  
Pisandro a te s'inchina, e ciò che diede  
larga e prodiga sorte,  
dona a te, per te aduna  
sua novella fortuna.  
Questa regal corona  
che di comando è segno  
ti lascia in testimon di ciò che dona.  
Dopo il dono del core  
non ha dono maggiore.

**Penelope**

Anima generosa,  
prodigo cavaliere,

*(The fight follows, in which after a short combat  
Ulysses vanquishes Irus.)*

I am defeated, alas!

**Antinous**

You, the victor, be kind  
to the man who admits defeat.  
Irus, you are a mighty eater, but not a good fighter.

**Penelope**

Brave beggar, remain at the court  
respected and safe.  
A man clad in tattered and modest clothing  
is not always worthless.

**Scene XIII**

*Peisander and Amphinomus arrive*

**Peisander**

Beautiful queen,  
Peisander bows before you,  
and what generous,  
lavish fate has given me  
I give to you to join a new fortune to yours.  
This royal crown,  
symbol of sovereignty,  
I give you as a token of my gifts.  
There is no greater gift  
than the gift of a heart.

**Penelope**

Generous soul,  
extravagant nobleman,

ben sei d'impero degno,  
che non merita men chi dona un regno.

**Anfinomo**

Se t'invaglia il desio  
d'accettar regni in dono,  
ben so donar anch'io,  
ed anch'io rege sono.  
Queste pompose spoglie,  
questi regali ammanti  
confessano superbi  
i miei ossequi, i tuoi vanti.

**Penelope**

Nobil contesa e generosa gara,  
ove amator discreto  
l'arte del ben amar donando impara.

**Antinoo**

Il mio cor che t'adora,  
non ti vuol sua Regina.  
L'anima che s'inchina ad adorarti,  
Deità vuol chiamarti,  
e come Dea t'incensa coi sospiri,  
fa vittime i desiri,  
e con quest'ori  
t'offre voti ed honori.

**Penelope**

Non andran senza premio  
opre cotanto eccelse.  
Ché donna quando dona  
se non è prima accesa al cor s'accende,  
e donna quando toglie,

you are indeed a worthy ruler,  
for he who gives a kingdom deserves no less.

**Amphinomus**

If you are inclined  
to accept kingdoms as a gifts,  
then I too can give  
for I also am a king.  
This striking appearance,  
this regal apparel,  
bear proud witness  
to my adoration and your merits.

**Penelope**

A noble contest, a generous match  
from which a prudent suitor  
can learn how to express love with gifts.

**Antinous**

My heart, that adores you,  
does not want you as its queen;  
the soul which bows to worship you  
would call you a deity  
and, as goddess, sanctify you with sighs  
and offers passion in sacrifice  
and with this gold  
offers vows and honours you.

**Penelope**

Such excellent deeds  
will not be unrewarded.  
For when a woman gives  
if she is not already kindled, then her heart ignites  
and when a woman takes away

se non è prima resa al cor s'arrende.  
Hor t'affretta, Melanto, e qui m'arrec  
l'arco del forte Ulisse e la faretra.  
E chi sarà di voi  
con l'arco poderoso  
saettator più fiero,  
avrà d'Ulisse e la moglie e l'Impero.

**Telemaco**

Ulisse, e dove sei?  
Che fai? Che non ripari  
le tue perdite e in un gl'affanni miei?

**Penelope**

Ma che, ma che promise  
bocca facile, ah, troppo  
discordante dal core?  
Numi del Cielo, s'io 'l dissi,  
snodaste voi la lingua, apriste i detti.  
Saran tutti del Cielo e delle Stelle  
prodigiosi effetti.

**Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo**

Lieta, soave gloria,  
grata e dolce vittoria.  
Cari pianti  
degli amanti,  
cor fedele, costante sen,  
cangia 'l torbido in seren.

if she is not already vanquished, she surrenders.  
Now hurry, Melantho and bring me  
the bow and quiver of the mighty Ulysses.  
And whoever amongst you  
can most expertly shoot an arrow  
with the powerful bow  
will win Ulysses' wife and kingdom.

**Telemachus**

Ulysses, where are you?  
What are you doing? Why do you not redress  
your losses, and at the same time my distress?

**Penelope**

But why did my mouth  
lightly make promises  
so at odds with my heart?  
Gods in Heaven, if I said that,  
it was you who released my tongue  
and formed the words.  
These must all be celestial machinations.

**Amphinomus, Peisander, Antinous**

Happy, sweet glory,  
satisfying and sweet victory!  
The charming tears  
of lovers,  
a faithful heart, a steadfast heart  
change trouble to peace.

**Penelope**

Ecco l'arco d'Ulisse,  
anzi l'arco d'Amor  
che dêe passarmi il cor.  
Pisandro, a te lo porgo.  
Chi fu il primo a donar,  
sia 'l primo a saettar.

**Pisandro**

Amor, se fosti arciero in saettarmi,  
hor da' forza a quest'armi,  
ché vincendo dirò:  
s'un arco mi ferì,  
un arco mi sanò.

Il braccio non vi giunge,  
il polso non v'arriva.  
Ceda la vinta forza,  
col non poter anco 'l desio s'ammorza.

**Anfinomo**

Amor, picciolo nume,  
non sa di saettar,  
se trafigge i mortali,  
son le saette sue sguardi, non strali.  
Ch'a nume pargoletto  
negano d'obbedir l'arme di Marte.  
Tu, fiero Dio, le mie vittorie affretta,  
il trionfo di Marte a te s'aspetta.

**Penelope**

Here is Ulysses' bow,  
or rather the bow of Cupid  
that must pierce my heart.  
Peisander, I hand it to you:  
he who was the first to give  
shall be the first to shoot.

**Peisander**

Cupid, if you were the archer who pierced me,  
now give strength to this arm  
that I may say in conquering:  
if one bow has wounded me,  
another will heal me.

My arm cannot do it,  
my wrist cannot reach.  
My vanquished strength surrenders;  
my passion weakens together with my might.

**Amphinomus**

Cupid, little god,  
knows not how to shoot:  
if he pierces mortals, his darts  
are glances, not arrows.  
The weapons of Mars refuse  
to obey a little child.  
You, fierce god, hasten my victory;  
the triumph of Mars will be yours!

Com' intrattabile,  
com' indomabile  
l'arco si fa.  
Quel petto frigido,  
protervo e rigido  
per me sarà.

### **Antinoo**

Cedan Marte ed Amore  
ove impera beltà.  
Chi non vince in honor non vincerà.  
Penelope, m'accingo  
in virtù del tuo bello all'alta prova.

Virtù, valor non giova.  
Forse forza d'incanto  
contende il dolce vanto.  
Ah, ch'egli è vero ch'ogni cosa fedele  
ad Ulisse si rende,  
e sin l'arco d'Ulisse  
Ulisse attende.

### **Penelope**

Son vani, oscuri pregi  
i titoli de' regi.  
Senza valor, il sangue,  
ornamento regale,  
illustri scettri a sostener non vale.  
Chi simile ad Ulisse  
virtude non possiede,  
de' tesori d'Ulisse è indegno erede.

How unyielding,  
how untamable  
is this bow!  
That cold heart  
will remain defiant  
and unyielding to me.

### **Antinous**

Mars and Cupid have no power  
where beauty reigns.  
Winning without honour is not winning.  
Penelope, I gird myself for the supreme test  
with the virtue of your beauty.

Strength and courage are not enough.  
Perhaps the power of a spell  
fights against my merit.  
Ah, it may be true that everything  
proves faithful to Ulysses,  
and even Ulysses' bow  
is awaiting Ulysses!

### **Penelope**

Vain and empty  
are the titles of kings;  
Without valour, lineage  
and trappings of royalty  
are not enough to sustain illustrious sceptres.  
Whoever lacks Ulysses' strength  
is an unworthy heir  
to Ulysses' treasures.



**Ulisse**

Gioventude superba  
sempre valor non serba,  
come vecchiezza humile  
ad ognor non è vile.  
Regina, in queste membra  
tengo un'alma sì ardita  
ch'alla prova m'invita.  
Il giusto non eccedo,  
rinunzio il premio, e la fatica io chiedo.

**Penelope**

Concedasi al mendico  
la prova faticosa.  
Contesa gloriosa,  
contro petti virili d'un fianco antico,  
ché tra rossori involti,  
darà 'l foco d'Amor, vergogna ai volti.

**Ulisse**

Questa mia destra humile  
s'arma a tuo conto, o Cielo.  
Le vittorie apprestate, o sommi Dei,  
s'a voi son cari i sacrifici miei.

**Pisandro, Anfinomo, Antinoo** (*a tre*)  
Meraviglie, stupori, prodigi estremi.

**Ulisse**

Giove nel suo tuonar grida vendetta.  
Così l'arco saetta.  
Alle morti, alle stragi, alle ruine.

**Ulysses**

The arrogance of youth  
does not always imply bravery,  
just as humble old age  
is not always cowardly.  
O queen! In this body  
I have a soul so bold  
that it pushes me to the test.  
I will not ask more than is legitimate:  
I renounce the reward but ask for the trial.

**Penelope**

Grant the beggar  
the difficult trial!  
A glorious contest  
of an aged frame against these virile chests,  
although humiliated  
Love's flame will make them blush.

**Ulysses**

My humble right hand,  
arms itself on your behalf, O heaven!  
Prepare my victory, O mighty gods,  
if my trials are dear to you!

**Amphinomus, Peisander, Antinous**

Wonder, astonishment, miraculous in the extreme!

**Ulysses**

Jupiter with his thunder cries calls for vengeance.  
So the bow shoots.  
To death, to slaughter, to destruction!

CD3 Act 3

## ATTO 3

### 1 Scena I

*Iro*

**Iro**

O dolor, o martir che l'alma attrista.  
O mesta rimembranza  
di dolorosa vista.  
Io vidi i Proci estinti,  
i Proci, i Proci furo uccisi.  
Ah, ch'io perdei  
le delizie del ventre e della gola.  
Chi soccorre il digiun,  
chi lo consola?  
Con flebile parola.  
I Proci, Iro, perdesti.  
I Proci, i padri tuoi.  
Sgorga pur quanto vuoi  
lagrime amare, e meste,  
ché padre è chi ti ciba e chi ti veste.  
Chi più della tua fame  
satollerà le brame?  
Non troverai chi goda  
empir del vasto ventre  
l'affamate caverne.  
Non troverai chi rida  
del ghiotto trionfar della tua gola.  
Chi soccorre il digiun,  
chi lo consola?  
Infausto giorno a mie ruine armato.  
Poco diansi mi vinse un vecchio ardito,  
hor m'abbatte la fame,  
dal cibo abbandonato.

## ACT 3

### Scene 1

*Irus*

**Irus**

Oh grief, oh torment that oppresses the soul!  
Oh woeful memory  
of a dismal sight!  
I saw the suitors dead:  
the suitors were slain.  
Alas, I have lost the delights  
of the belly and of my gluttony!  
Who will aid a starving man,  
who will console him?  
Oh for a gentle word!  
You have lost the suitors, Irus,  
the suitors, your fathers.  
Cry as much as you will,  
bitter and woeful tears,  
for your father is he who feeds and clothes you.  
Who will ever  
satisfy your hunger again?  
You will not find anyone who takes delight  
in filling the hungry caverns  
of your vast belly;  
you will not find anyone who laughs  
at the greedy display of your gluttony.  
Who will aid a starving man,  
who will console him?  
Unhappy day, bent on my ruin:  
a little earlier, a bold old man vanquished me,  
and now I have no food,  
hunger defeats me.

L'hebbi già per nemica,  
l'ho distrutta, l'ho vinta.  
Hor troppo fora  
vederla vincitrice.  
Voglio uccider me stesso e non vo' mai  
ch'ella porti di me trionfo e gloria.  
Chi si toglie al nemico ha gran vittoria.  
Coraggioso mio core,  
vinci il dolore, e pria  
ch'alla fame nemica egli soccomba  
vada il mio corpo a disfamar la tomba.

## 2 Scena IV

*Eumete, Penelope*

### **Eumete**

Forza d'occulto affetto  
raddolcisce il tuo petto.  
Chi con un arco solo,  
isconosciuto, diede  
a cento morti il duolo,  
quel forte e quel robusto  
che domò l'arco e fé volar gli strali,  
colui che i Proci insidiosi e felli  
valoroso trafisse,  
rallègrati, Regina, egli era Ulisse.

### **Penelope**

Sei buon pastor, Eumete,  
se persuaso credi  
contro quello che vedi.

It was already my enemy,  
I destroyed it, I overcame it;  
Now I cannot bear to  
see it victorious.  
I want to kill myself, and never allow it  
to claim triumph and glory at my expense.  
For to elude an enemy is a great victory.  
My brave heart,  
overcome the pain  
and before it succumbs to hostile hunger,  
may my body be swallowed by a grave!

## Scene IV

*Eumaeus, Penelope*

### **Eumaeus**

May the power of hidden feelings  
soften your heart.  
The unknown man who, with a single bow,  
killed hundreds,  
this strong, sturdy man  
who tamed the bow and let the arrows fly,  
who bravely pierced  
the treacherous and ruthless suitors –  
rejoice, O queen –  
that man was Ulysses!

### **Penelope**

What a good shepherd you are, Eumaeus,  
if you don't trust  
what you see.

**Eumete**

Il canuto, l'antico,  
il povero, il mendico,  
che coi Proci superbi  
coraggioso attaccò mortali risse,  
rallègrati, Regina, egli era Ulisse.

**Penelope**

Credulo è il volgo e sciocco,  
è la tromba mendace  
della fama fallace.

**Eumete**

Ulisse io vidi, sì,  
Ulisse è vivo, è qui.

**Penelope**

Relator importuno,  
consolator nocivo.

**Eumete**

Dico che Ulisse è qui.  
Io stesso il vidi e 'l so.  
Non contenda il tuo no con il mio sì.  
Ulisse è vivo, è qui.

**Penelope**

Io non contendo teco  
perché sei stolto e cieco.

**Eumaeus**

The hoary old man,  
the pauper, the beggar,  
who courageously attacked  
the proud suitors in mortal combat –  
rejoice, O queen – he was Ulysses!

**Penelope**

People are credulous and gullible,  
and they wrongly repeat  
false rumours.

**Eumaeus**

I saw Ulysses, yes!  
Ulysses is alive, he is here!

**Penelope**

Tiresome messenger,  
pernicious comforter!

**Eumaeus**

I tell you Ulysses is here!  
I know because I myself saw him.  
Don't contradict me:  
Ulysses is alive, and here!

**Penelope**

I will not argue with you,  
because you are foolish and blind.

### 3 Scena V

*Telemaco, Penelope*

**Telemaco**

È saggio Eumete, è saggio.  
È ver quel che racconta.  
Ulisse, a te consorte ed a me padre,  
ha tutte uccise le nemiche squadre.  
Il comparir sotto mentito aspetto,  
sotto vecchia sembianza,  
arte fu di Minerva, e fu suo dono.

**Penelope**

Troppo egli è ver che gli huomini qui in terra  
servon di gioco agl'immortali Dei.  
Se ciò credi ancor tu, lor giuoco sei.

**Telemaco**

Volle così Minerva  
per ingannar con le sembianze finte  
gl'inimici d'Ulisse.

**Penelope**

Se d'ingannar gli Dei prendon diletto,  
chi far fede mi puote  
che non sia mio l'inganno,  
se fu mio tutto il danno?

**Telemaco**

Protettrice de' Greci  
è, come sai, Minerva,  
e più che gli altri Ulisse  
a lei fu caro.

### Scene V

*Telemachus, Penelope*

**Telemachus**

Eumaeus is right, he is right!  
What he tells is true:  
Ulysses, your husband and my father,  
has killed all the enemies.  
His appearance in disguise,  
in the semblance of an old man,  
was the work and gift of Minerva.

**Penelope**

Too often, indeed, must men here on earth  
serve as playthings of the immortal gods.  
If you believe that, you too are playing their game.

**Telemachus**

Minerva wished this,  
to deceive Ulysses' enemies  
with a disguise.

**Penelope**

If the gods take pleasure in deceiving,  
who can make me believe  
that I am not deceived too,  
since I am the one who has suffered?

**Telemachus**

Minerva, as you know  
is the Greeks' protector,  
and nobody is as dear to her  
as Ulysses.

**Penelope**

Non han tanto pensiero  
 gli Dei, là sù nel cielo,  
 delle cose mortali.  
 Lasciano ch'arda il foco e agghiacci il gelo.  
 Figlian le cause lor piaceri e mali.

**4 Scena VI**

*Minerva, Giunone*

**Minerva**

Fiamma è l'ira, o gran Dea,  
 foco è lo sdegno.  
 Noi, sdegnose ed irate,  
 incenerito habbiam di Troia il regno,  
 offese da un troian, ma vendicate.  
 Il più forte fra greci ancor contende  
 co'l destin, con il fato,  
 Ulisse addolorato.

**Giunone**

Per vendetta che piace  
 ogni prezzo è leggiero.  
 Vada il troiano impero  
 anco in peggio di polvere fugace.

**Minerva**

Dalle nostre vendette  
 nacquero in lui gli errori,  
 delle stragi dilette  
 son figli i suoi dolori.  
 Convien al nostro nume  
 il vindice salvar, placar gli sdegni  
 del Dio de' salsi regni.

**Penelope**

The gods in heaven  
 don't give much thought  
 to human vicissitudes.  
 They allow fire to burn and ice to freeze.  
 Their quarrels spawn joy and misery.

**Scene VI**

*Minerva, Juno*

**Minerva**

Wrath is flame, O great goddess,  
 indignation is fire.  
 In our wrath and indignation  
 we have burned down the kingdom of Troy,  
 slighted by a Trojan, but avenged.  
 The mightiest of the Greeks still struggles  
 with destiny, with fate:  
 sorrowful Ulysses.

**Juno**

For a satisfying vengeance  
 no price is too high.  
 May the Trojan empire  
 disappear like dust!

**Minerva**

His transgressions were  
 caused by our vengeance;  
 his suffering born  
 from the glorious massacres.  
 It befits our sovereign god  
 to save the avenger, to placate the anger  
 of the god of the brackish realms.

**Giunone**

Procurerò la pace,  
 ricercherò il riposo  
 d'Ulisse glorioso.

**Minerva**

Per te, del sommo Giove  
 e sorella, e consorte,  
 s'aprono nove in ciel divine porte.

**5 Scena VII**

*Giunone, Giove, Nettuno, Coro in cielo,  
 Coro marittimo e dette*

**Giunone**

Gran Giove, alma de' Dei, Dio delle menti,  
 mente dell'Universo,  
 tu che 'l tutto governi e tutto sei,  
 inchina le tue grazie a pieghi miei.  
 Ulisse troppo errò,  
 troppo, ah!, troppo soffrì,  
 tornalo in pace un dì.  
 Fu divin il voler che lo destò.  
 Ulisse troppo errò.

**Giove**

Per me non avrà mai  
 vota preghiera Giuno,  
 ma placar pria conviensi  
 lo sdegnato Nettuno.  
 Odimi, o Dio del mar.  
 Fu scritto qui, dove il destin s'accoglie,  
 dell'eccidio troiano il fatal punto.  
 Hor, ch'al suo fine il destinato è giunto,

**Juno**

I will obtain peace,  
 pursue serenity  
 for glorious Ulysses.

**Minerva**

Because of you, sister and consort  
 of Jupiter the highest,  
 new gates will open in Heaven.

**Scene VII**

*Juno, Jupiter, Neptune, Choir in Heaven,  
 Choir of the Sea*

**Juno**

Great Jupiter, soul of the gods, god of reason,  
 mastermind of the universe,  
 you who rule everything and encompass everything,  
 graciously fulfil my prayers.  
 Ulysses has wandered for too long,  
 too long, ah, too long has he suffered:  
 restore him to peace one day.  
 It was a divine will that roused him,  
 Ulysses has wandered too much.

**Jupiter**

To me you will never  
 pray in vain, Juno,  
 but first wrathful Neptune must be placated.  
 Hear me, god of the sea!  
 Here, where fate is decreed,  
 the day of the Trojan massacre was ordered.  
 Now that the ordained one  
 has reached his destination,



sdegno ozioso un gentil petto invoglia.  
Fu ministro del Fato Ulisse il forte.  
Soffrì, vinse, pugnò, campion celeste.  
Per lui, mentre di cenere si veste,  
cittadina di Troia, errò la Morte.  
Nettun, pace,  
O Nettun, Nettun, perdona  
il suo duolo al mortal ch'afflitto il rese.  
Ecco, scrive il destin le sue difese.  
Non è colpa dell'huom se 'l Cielo tuona.

### **Nettuno**

Se ben quest'onde frigide,  
se ben quest'onde gelide  
mai sentono l'ardor di tua pietà,  
nei fondi algosi ed infimi,  
nei cupi acquosi termini  
il decreto di Giove anco si sa.  
Contro i Feaci arditi e temerari  
mio sdegno si sfogò.  
Pagò il delitto pessimo  
la nave che restò.  
Viva felice pur,  
viva Ulisse sicur.

### **Coro in cielo**

Giove amoroso  
fa il Ciel pietoso  
nel perdonar.

### **Coro marittimo**

Ben ch'abbia il gelo  
non men del Cielo  
pietoso il mar.

let anger subside and kindness enter your breast.  
Ulysses was a servant of fate:  
the hero suffered, conquered, fought  
as a champion of heaven.  
Because of him, death  
walked the streets of Troy clothed in ashes.  
Neptune, peace O Neptune!  
Relieve this man of his suffering.  
Here destiny writes his defence;  
it is not man's fault if heaven inveighs.

### **Neptune**

Well may these waves be frigid,  
well may these waters be icy,  
but they feel the warmth of your mercy.  
Jupiter's decree is heard  
even in the abysses rich in seaweed,  
and in the dark watery depths.  
Against the daring, rash Phaeacians  
I gave vent to my wrath;  
the terrible offence was paid for  
by their petrified ship.  
May he live happily,  
may Ulysses live in safety!

### **Choir in Heaven**

The loving Jupiter  
makes heaven merciful  
with his forgiveness.

### **Choir of the Sea**

In spite of its coldness,  
no less merciful  
than heaven is the sea.

**Coro in cielo, Coro marittimo**

Prega, mortal, deh, prega,  
ché sdegnato e pregato un Dio si piega.

**Giove**

Minerva, hor fia tua cura  
d'acquetar i tumulti  
de' sollevati Achivi,  
ché per vendetta degli estinti Proci  
pensano portar guerra  
all'Itacense terra.

**Minerva**

Rintuzzerò quei spirti,  
smorzerò quegli ardori,  
comanderò la pace,  
Giove, come a te piace.

**6 Scena VIII**

*Reggia*  
*Ericlea*

**Ericlea**

Ericlea, che vuoi far?  
Vuoi tacer, o parlar?  
Se parli, tu consoli.  
Obbedisci, se taci.  
Sei tenuta a servir,  
obbligata ad amar.  
Vuoi tacer, o parlar?  
Ma ceda all'obbedienza la pietà.  
Non si dêe sempre dir ciò che si sa.  
Medicar chi languisce, o, che diletto.  
Ma che ingiurie e dispetto

**Both choirs**

Pray, mortal, oh pray,  
for a wrathful god can be placated through prayer.

**Jupiter**

Minerva, now your task  
is to quell the uprising  
of the Achaeans,  
who, in vengeance for the death of the suitors,  
intend to wage war  
against Ithaca.

**Minerva**

I shall calm these feelings,  
I shall smother those flames,  
I shall command peace,  
Jupiter, as you wish.

**Scene VIII**

*The palace*  
*Eurycleia*

**Eurycleia**

Eurycleia, what should you do?  
Will you be silent or speak?  
If you speak, you bring comfort,  
but you were ordered to be silent.  
You are bound in service,  
yet pledged to love.  
Will you be silent or speak?  
But let pity yield to obedience:  
one must not tell all one knows.  
To heal the suffering, oh what pleasure!  
But what injury and outrage

scoprir l'altrui pensier.  
Bella cosa talvolta è un bel tacer.  
È ferita crudele  
il poter con parole  
consolar chi si duole, e non lo far.  
Ma del pentirsi al fin  
assai lunge è il tacer, più che 'l parlar.  
Bel segreto taciuto  
tosto scoprir si può.  
Una sol volta detto  
celarlo non potrò.  
Ericlea, che farai?  
Tacerai tu?  
In somma un bel tacer mai scritto fu.

## 7 Scena IX

*Penelope, Telemaco, Eumete*

### **Penelope**

Ogni vostra ragion sen porta 'l vento.  
Non ponno i vostri sogni  
consolar le vigilie  
dell'anima smarrita.  
Le favole fan riso e non dan vita.

### **Telemaco, Eumete**

Troppo incredula, troppo.  
Troppo ostinata, troppo.  
È più che vero, di vero è più  
che 'l vecchio arciero Ulisse fu.

### **Telemaco**

Eccolo che sen viene,  
e la sua forma tiene.

to disclose the thoughts of others;  
the best thing is sometimes silence.  
It is cruel  
to be able, with words,  
to console one who is suffering and not do it;  
but in the end  
one regrets silence less than speaking out.  
A beautifully kept secret  
can soon be revealed,  
but once it is told,  
it can no longer be concealed.  
Eurycleia, what will you do,  
will you keep silent?  
After all, complete silence was never ordered.

## Scene IX

*Penelope, Telemachus, Eumaeus*

### **Penelope**

The wind has blown away your mind.  
Your fantasies cannot  
comfort the sleepless nights  
of a lost soul.  
Fairytales entertain, but they are not real.

### **Telemachus, Eumaeus**

She is too incredulous!  
Too stubborn!  
It is indeed true, it is more than true  
that the aged archer was Ulysses.

### **Telemachus**

Here he comes  
in his own guise.

**Eumete**

Ulisse, Ulisse egli è.

**Telemaco**

Eccolo affé.

## 8 Scena X e ultima

*Ulisse in sua forma, Penelope, Ericlea*

**Ulisse**

O delle mie fatiche  
meta dolce e soave,  
porto caro, amoroso,  
dove corro al riposo.

**Penelope**

Férmati, Cavaliero,  
incantator o mago.  
Di tue finte mutanze io non m'appago.

**Ulisse**

Così del tuo consorte,  
così dunque t'appressi  
ai lungamente sospirati amplessi?

**Penelope**

Consorte io sono, ma del perduto Ulisse,  
né incantesimi o magie  
perturberan la fé, le voglie mie.

**Eumaeus**

It is Ulysses.

**Telemachus**

He is here indeed!

## Scene X

*Ulysses in his true form, Penelope, Eurycleia*

**Ulysses**

Oh sweet and gentle reward  
of all my trials,  
beloved haven  
where I seek to rest!

**Penelope**

Halt, knight,  
enchanter or magician!  
I am not fooled by your transformations.

**Ulysses**

Will you thus  
receive the long awaited  
embrace of your husband?

**Penelope**

I am the spouse of the lost Ulysses,  
neither spells nor magic  
will shake my faithfulness and my will.

**Ulisse**

In honor de' tuoi rai  
l'eternità sprezzai,  
volontario cangiando e stato, e sorte.  
Per serbarmi fedel son giunto a morte.

**Penelope**

Quel valor che ti rese  
ad Ulisse simile,  
care mi fa le stragi  
degli amanti malvagi.  
Questo di tua bugia  
il dolce frutto sia.

**Ulisse**

Quell'Ulisse son io,  
delle ceneri avanzo,  
residuo delle morti,  
degli adùlteri e ladri  
fiero castigator, e non seguace.

**Penelope**

Non sei tu 'l primo ingegno,  
che con nome mentito,  
tentasse di trovar comando o Regno.

**Ericlea**

Hor di parlar è tempo.  
È questo Ulisse,  
casta e gran donna, io lo conobbi all'ora  
che nudo al bagno venne, ove scopersi  
del feroce cinghiale  
l'honorato segnale.

**Ulysses**

For your beauty  
I willingly relinquished immortality,  
changing my standing and my destiny.  
To remain faithful I have made myself mortal.

**Penelope**

That bravery which makes you  
similar to Ulysses  
makes me thankful for the slaughter  
of the wicked suitors.  
This shall be the welcome result  
of your lie.

**Ulysses**

I am that Ulysses,  
risen out of the ashes,  
death's survivor,  
fierce castigator of adulterers and thieves  
and not their companion.

**Penelope**

You are not the first to try  
and gain power or a kingdom  
under false pretences

**Eurycleia**

Now it is time to speak out.  
This is truly Ulysses, chaste and great lady.  
I recognized him  
when he undressed to be bathed,  
so I discovered the scar  
caused by the ferocious wild boar.

**Penelope**

Creder ciò che desio m'insegna Amore,  
serbar costante il sen comanda honore.  
Dubbio pensier che fai?  
La fé negata ai prieghi  
del buon custode Eumete,  
di Telemaco il figlio,  
alla vecchia nutrice anco si nieghi.  
Ch'il mio pudico letto  
sol d'Ulisse è ricetto.

**Ulisse**

Del tuo casto pensiero io so 'l costume.  
So che 'l letto pudico,  
che, tranne Ulisse solo, altro non vide,  
ogni notte da te s'adorna e copre  
con un serico drappo  
di tua mano contesto, in cui si vede  
co'l virginal suo coro  
Diana effigiata.  
M'accompagnò mai sempre  
memoria così grata.

**Penelope**

Hor sì ti riconosco, hor sì ti credo  
antico possessore  
del combattuto core.  
Honestà mi perdoni,  
dono tutte ad Amor le sue ragioni.

**Ulisse**

Sciogli la lingua, deh, sciogli  
per allegrezza i nodi,  
un sospir, un oimé la voce snodi.

**Penelope**

Love instructs me to believe what I wish for,  
but honour commands my heart to be steadfast.  
Doubts, what are you doing?  
I did not give credence to the pleas  
of the good shepherd Eumaeus,  
of Telemachus, my son,  
so I shall do the same for the old nurse.  
For my chaste bed  
can receive Ulysses alone.

**Ulysses**

I know your chaste custom.  
I know that the modest bed,  
which has seen no man  
other than Ulysses,  
is every night bedecked and covered by you  
with a silken cloth woven by your own hand,  
depicting Diana  
with her virginal companions.  
Such dear memory  
stayed with me always.

**Penelope**

Now, yes, I recognize you,  
now, yes, I believe you,  
early owner of my embattled heart.  
May modesty forgive me!  
I give in to Cupid.

**Ulysses**

Untie your tongue,  
release the constraints,  
let your voice release a regret and a sigh.

**Penelope**

Illustratevi o cieli,  
rinfioratevi o prati,  
Aure gioite.  
Gl'augelletti cantando,  
i rivi mormorando hor si rallegrino.  
Quell'herbe verdeggianti,  
quell'onde sussurranti hor si consolino,  
già ch'è sorta felice  
dal cenere troian la mia fenice.

**Ulisse, Penelope**

Sospirato mio sole.  
Rinnovata mia luce.  
Porto quieto e riposo.  
Bramato, sì, ma caro.  
Per te gl'andati affanni  
a benedir imparo.  
Non si rammenti  
più de' tormenti,  
tutto è piacer.  
Fuggan dai petti  
dogliosi affetti,  
tutto è goder.  
Del piacer, del goder  
venuto è 'l dì.  
Sì, vita, sì, sì, core, sì, sì.

**Penelope**

Shine, O skies,  
flower, O meadows!  
Rejoice, you breezes!  
The singing birds,  
the murmuring brooks shall rejoice!  
The green grass, the rippling waves  
can take solace.  
For my Phoenix arises  
joyously from the Trojan ashes.

**Ulysses, Penelope**

My longed-for sun!  
My restored light!  
Calm haven and rest!  
Yearned for, yes, but beloved.  
For you I learn to bless  
the tribulations I went through.  
Forget  
all the suffering,  
everything is joy.  
May our hearts  
shun sadness.  
Everything is delight.  
The time of happiness,  
of rejoicing has finally come.  
Yes, my life, yes, yes, my heart, yes, yes!

## **Monteverdi Choir**

### **Tenors**

Hugo Hymas  
Graham Neal

### **Basses**

Alexander Ashworth  
Samuel Evans  
Lawrence Wallington

and the cast

## **English Baroque Soloists**

### **Violins**

Kati Debretzeni  
Iona Davies  
Henry Tong

Anne Schumann  
Henrietta Wayne  
Davina Clarke

### **Viola**

Fanny Paccoud  
Lisa Cochrane  
Aliye Cornish  
Malgorzata Ziemkiewicz

### **Recorders**

Rachel Beckett  
Catherine Latham

### **Dulcian**

Gyorgyi Farkas

### **Cornetti**

Jamie Savan  
Richard Thomas

### **Cello**

Marco Frezzato

### **Viola da Gamba (dbl. Lirone)**

Kinga Gaborjani

### **Double Bass**

Valerie Botwright

### **Harpsichord / Organ**

Antonio Greco  
Paolo Zanzu

### **Lute (4 dbl. guitar)**

David Miller  
Elizabeth Kenny  
Eligio Quinteiro  
Josias Rodriquez Gandara

### **Harp**

Gwyneth Wentink



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The National Forum of Music in Wrocław is a state-of-the-art concert venue, including, among others, four concert halls, with the main hall seating 1800 people. The four auditoriums can boast of excellent acoustics. The NFM is also a progressive performing arts organisation whose aim is to propagate active participation in cultural life among Wrocław citizens and visitors to the city. The intensive educational and promotional activities have resulted in eight festivals being presented by the NFM (including the Andrzej Markowski International Festival Wratislavia Cantans), each year hosting the most outstanding Polish and international artists. The venue itself has become a meeting place for various artistic genres, not only musical. The NFM is home to 11 resident ensembles: NFM Wrocław Philharmonic, NFM Leopoldinum Orchestra, Wrocław Baroque Orchestra, NFM Choir, NFM Boys' Choir, Lutosławski Quartet, LutosAir Quintet, NFM Ensemble, NFM Leopoldinum String Trio, Polish Cello Quartet, and Wrocław Baroque Ensemble. The National Forum of Music's recording catalogue continues to grow, and each year sees the release of several new CDs with versatile repertoire. A gamut of educational activities is addressed to all age groups. Andrzej Kosendiak, now serving as NFM Director, is one of the founding fathers of the NFM.

*'The National Forum of Music in Wrocław has an immediate warmth, which you feel in your body. I would love to do my recordings here.'*

**Iván Fischer**, Founder and Music Director of the Budapest Festival Orchestra

*'It is one of the best concert halls in the world.'*

**Lang Lang**, pianist

*'A visit to Wrocław which does not include the NFM would be akin to going to Rome and skipping St Peter's.'*

**Jonathan Sutherland**,  
Bachtrack.com

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The logo for Solideogloria, featuring a stylized, handwritten-style 'Sdg' in a dark blue color.

Soli Deo Gloria