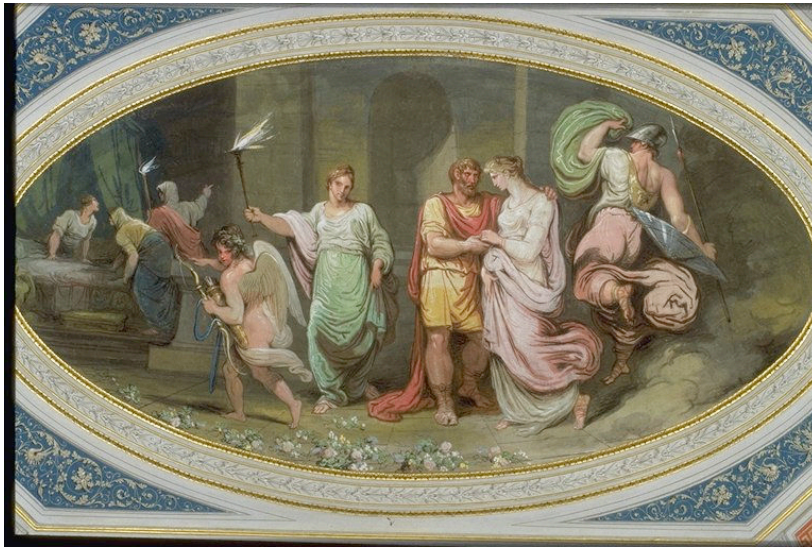


OPERA ATELIER

timeless



The Return of Ulysses
By C. Monteverdi

Study Guide

The Making of an Opera
November 5-9th, 2007

www.operaatelier.com

The Return of Ulysses 2007

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About Opera Atelier

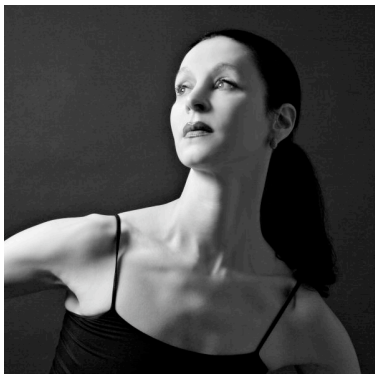


Opera Atelier holds a unique place in the North American theatre community, producing opera, ballet and drama from the 17th and 18th centuries. These productions draw upon the aesthetics and ideals of the period, featuring soloists of international acclaim, period ballet, original instruments, elaborate stage decor, exquisite costumes and an imaginative energy that sets Opera Atelier apart. Opera Atelier is not in the business of “reconstruction”, rather, each production is a new creative effort and takes its own place in history. We strive to create productions that would have been recognized and respected in their own time while providing a thrilling theatrical experience for modern audiences.

Under the direction of founders Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Zingg, Opera Atelier has been acclaimed throughout Canada, in Houston, Cleveland, New York, Stuttgart, Halle, Bremen, London (BBC Proms), Paris, Montreux, Citta di Castello, Singapore, throughout Japan and, most recently, in Seoul Korea. We collaborate with some of early music’s most distinguished artists including Andrew Parrott, Trevor Pinnock, Hervé Niquet, Marc Minkowski and many others. Opera Atelier’s 2000 production of Lully’s *Persée* (performed for the first time since the 18th century) was hailed as “the operatic event of the year, a triumph for director Marshall Pynkoski, choreographer Jeannette Zingg, their design team and their cast...” William Littler, *The Toronto Star*



Marshall Pynkoski



Jeannette Zingg

Mr. Pynkoski and Ms. Zingg also direct The School of Atelier Ballet (S.A.B.) which now operates under the umbrella of Opera Atelier. Graduates of the S.A.B. are performing professionally in companies throughout North America and Europe including The National Ballet of Canada and Opera Atelier. Opera Atelier’s commitment to education extends to their Making of an Opera Program, which has introduced thousands of children to all aspects of production and performance. Opera Atelier has received four Lieutenant-Governor Awards for Excellence in Arts Management.

Baroque Opera Explained

Baroque opera has its beginnings in the late Renaissance in Italy. It was originally conceived as an attempt to revive ancient Greek drama and give that art form back to humanity. Although no classical "Greek" music survived, Renaissance scholars were aware that Greek drama included declamation, and choral chanting, which was accompanied by percussive instruments and rhythmic movement/ or dancing. Consequently, early attempt at reviving this art form included all of these elements in additions to stories based on Classical themes and mythology.

As absolute monarchs throughout Europe identified themselves more and more strongly with Greek heroes and myth makers, they appropriated these stories and frequently used them as a means of personal promotion.

By the 17th century opera had become a highly respected and codified art form in its own right. The gorgeous and elaborate productions of the 17th and 18th centuries were expensive to mount and required exceptionally well trained singers, instrumentalists, dancers, machinists and scenic artists.

The greatest composers of the world lent their talents to developing this art form which came to be seen as one of the sublime examples of human creativity. Baroque opera encompassed all of the arts, and enjoyed unparalleled popularity well into the 19th century.

Opera is the stylish, dazzling, often beautiful, often sad, warm hearted, funny, serious and even sexy form of music that has enriched our lives for hundreds of years. Originally an art form for a privileged few, opera has evolved into an international multi-media crowd pleaser.

The word 'opera' is Italian and comes from the plural for the word 'opus' which means work. As 'opera' in Italian is called opera lirica or lyric work and 'lyric' means "appropriate song" then opera lirica actually means a work of theatre that is set to song.

Opera combines the best of all worlds- awesome singing, rich orchestral sounds, drama, dance, spectacular sets, lavish costumes, elaborate lighting and special effects. These artistic qualities combine to make opera one of the most powerful and comprehensive art forms.

The word "baroque" was originally used as an insult to describe art or music which was overly extravagant, even slightly bizarre. It comes from the Portuguese word *barroco*, a misshapen pearl. In the twentieth century it has become the respectable nickname for music from about 1600, when opera was born in Italy, until about 1750, the year of Johann Sebastian Bach's death.

A Glossary of Opera Terms

Aria: Italian for 'air', an aria is the major vocal piece where one singer expresses feelings and showcases the voice. Called a "static" moment in the scene, an aria freezes the action of the plot to focus on the emotions or thought.

Duet: An aria composed for two. Two singers express their feelings to each other or to the audience.

Libretto: Italian for 'little book', a libretto refers to the script of an opera, written by the librettist. There is much debate over which is written for which: libretto for the music, or vice versa!

Recitative: Speech-singing, where the singer semi-chants the words in rhythm of free speech. Recitative is used to further the plot ("kinetic") or set up an aria and can be seen as a precursor to rap music.

Chorus: A group of singers who perform the vital role of providing support to the principle singers. The chorus sets the scene and creates the mood for an opera, much like the way a Greek chorus furthers the plot and propels the action. It is composed of all voice ranges.

Voice Categories and Types:

Coloratura Soprano: Singer with the highest range of notes.

Soprano: Singer with a high range of notes. Lyric sopranos are light in quality while dramatic sopranos have a full rich tone.

Mezzo- Soprano: A middle range female voice.

Contralto: The lowest range of the female voice, rich voice quality. Mezzo and Contralto singer are almost interchangeable, and for this reason we almost never hear of contraltos.

Tenor: Has the highest range of notes of the male voices.

Helden Tenor: Literally a 'heroic tenor' with a strong voice and strong stamina.

Baritone: A middle range voice.

Bass: The lowest of the male voices.

Basso Buffo: Italian for 'buffoon bass', who often sings repeated low notes and plays comic roles.

Castrati: Castrati singers flourished during the period 1650-1750 singing both male and female roles. Their popularity was due in short to the shortage of female singers. They were noted for their pure white tone and vocal flexibility.

Countertenor: A male alto who trains his falsetto voice rather than the lower range. Countertenors specialize in parts originally written for castrati.

Male Soprano: The male soprano vocal range goes considerably beyond that of a countertenor and possesses a rare and unusual kind of adult male voice.

Synopsis *The Return of Ulysses*

Based on the second half of Homer's *Odyssey* (Books 13 to 24), the opera follows Ulysses' progress toward his goal, his return to his homeland, as the title says.

PROLOGUE

Human Frailty is presented as a character who is taunted by Time, Fortune and Love. This threesome claims, in a final trio, to control man's fate in turn rendering him weak, poor and confused. The character of Human Frailty is linked both to Penelope and Ulysses, both of whom suffer at the hands of these three antagonists.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE – THE PALACE

Penelope laments Ulysses' long absence in a passionate monologue. The nurse Ericlea interjects, echoing her mistress' distress. Penelope cannot be comforted and exits in a state of hopelessness and depression

SCENE TWO – THE PALACE

Meanwhile, the household has been driven into debauchery by an unscrupulous group of suitors who, believing Ulysses to be dead, vie for Penelope's hand. Two of the servants, Melanto and Eurimaco flirt

lasciviously in vivid contrast to Penelope's mournful mood. In this scene we learn that Eurimaco is allied with the suitors and has urged Melanto to convince Penelope to accept one of them as her husband.

SCENE THREE – THE SEA AND SKY

Neptune and Jove debate the fate of the Phaeacian sailors who have disobeyed Neptune's command by returning Ulysses to his homeland. Jove agrees to allow Neptune to punish the sailors. The sailors arrogantly sing of man's independence of the gods, whereupon Neptune destroys them and their ship. He states that Ulysses will accomplish his return only with the help of the gods.

SCENE FOUR – THE SHORE OF ITHACA

Ulysses awakens on the shore of Ithaca believing himself to have been abandoned by the Phaeacian sailors in a foreign land. The goddess Minerva appears, disguised as a shepherd boy and Ulysses hopes this youth will help him find his way. In the ensuing conversation Ulysses learns that he is in Ithaca (his home) and the shepherd reveals himself to be Minerva. Minerva tells Ulysses that suitors have laid siege to his wife and kingdom, and that Penelope has remained faithful. Minerva disguises Ulysses as an old man and sends him to find Eumaeus, the keeper of his flocks.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE – THE PALACE

The servant Melanto urges Penelope to choose one of the suitors as a husband, but the Queen is adamant in her refusal. She will not increase her suffering by falling in love again.

SCENE TWO – A PASTORAL SETTING

Eumaeus (the keeper of Ulysses' flocks) delights in his pastoral existence. Ulysses arrives, disguised as a beggar and assures him that Ulysses is alive and well and will soon return.

Eumaeus, knowing that beggars are favoured by the gods offers Ulysses shelter and leads him away.

SCENE THREE – MINERVA'S CHARIOT

Minerva flies Telemaco, (Ulysses' son who was travelling in search of his father) back to Ithaca in her chariot. He and Minerva sing a duet in praise of the god's power.

SCENE FOUR – A PASTORAL SETTING

Eumaeus joyfully welcomes Telemaco and introduces the beggar who has predicted Ulysses' return. Telemaco dispatches Eumaeus to the palace to inform Penelope of his arrival. Ulysses is transformed into his true being and he and Telemaco enjoy a moving reunion. Ulysses sends Telemaco to his mother telling him he will follow, but in his former disguise.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE – THE PALACE

Melanto tells Eurimaco of Penelope's unwillingness to choose a new husband. They, in contrast, abandon themselves to love.

SCENE TWO – THE PALACE

The suitors enter with Penelope and she rejects their offers of marriage. The suitors attempt to change her mood with singing and dancing which leads to an extended ballet.

SCENE THREE – THE PALACE

Eumaeus informs Penelope that her son will soon arrive as will Ulysses. Penelope responds sceptically. The suitors decide they must act quickly and plan to soften Penelope's resistance by presenting her with valuable gifts.

SCENE FOUR – THE PALACE

Minerva assures Ulysses that she will enable him to kill the suitors. Eumaeus then tells Ulysses of the suitors' fearful reaction to the news that he is alive.

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE – THE PALACE

The suitors appear and berate Eumaeus for bringing a beggar (Ulysses) to the Palace. Penelope protects the beggar and each suitor attempts in vain to woo the Queen with lavish gifts. Penelope (being magically controlled by Minerva) agrees to choose as husband the one who can string Ulysses' mighty bow. The suitors celebrate with singing and dancing. Each suitor fails the test whereupon the beggar (assuring the Queen he does not seek her as prize) asks to attempt the task. He strings the bow successfully and invoking Jove and Minerva with shouts for vengeance, he slays all the suitors.

ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE – THE PALACE

Eumaeus tells Penelope that the beggar was Ulysses in disguise but she refuses to believe him. Telemaco explains that the disguise was provided by Minerva but Penelope chides him for his gullibility.

SCENE TWO – THE PALACE

The nurse Ericalea considers whether or not to reveal that she recognized Ulysses in his bath by the scar on his thigh. Penelope continues to reject the idea that the beggar is Ulysses. Finally restored to his true form, Ulysses joins them to plead his case but Penelope fears she is being tricked. Only when Ulysses describes the embroidered bedcover made by Penelope and which only he has seen in the intimacy of their bedroom is she convinced. Her ensuing aria and their sensual final duet brings The Return of Ulysses to a close.

The Characters and Voice Types

Gods

- Giove - tenor
- Nettuno - bass
- Minerva - soprano

Mortals

- Ulysses - baritone or tenor
- Penelope, his wife - contralto
- Telemaco, his son - tenor or soprano
- Melanto, Penelope's handmaiden - mezzo-soprano
- Eumete, a shepherd - tenor
- Eurimaco, Melanto's lover - tenor
- Ericlea, Ulisse's nurse - contralto
- Penelope's suitors
 - Pisandro - tenor or countertenor
 - Anfinomo - tenor
 - Antinoo - bass
 - Iro, servant of the suitors - tenor
- Sailors, Phoenicians - men's chorus
- In the prologue
 - Human frailty - tenor or countertenor
 - Time - bass
 - Fortune - soprano
 - Amore - soprano

Noted Arias

"Di misera regina" (Penelope)

"Illustratevi o cieli" (Penelope)

"Dormo ancora" (Ulysses)

"Godo anc'io" (Ulysses)

"O gran figlio d'Ulisse" (Eumete)

The Orchestra - A Baroque Innovation

In renaissance instrumental ensemble music, each part was played by one musician. Baroque composers continued to compose solo and chamber music but they also experimented with creating a fuller sound by

putting several performers on one part to form an orchestra. The Tafelmusik Orchestra has adopted the configuration of one of Bach's orchestras which had two oboes, bassoon, harpsichord and strings.

Baroque composers began to compose more extended instrumental pieces than in former times and they created forms in which several movements could be grouped together. Sometimes these movements were in contrasting but related keys. Our modern system of major and minor keys is an invention of the baroque period; baroque composers were the first to think of their music as a series of chords built above a bass line, each having a relationship with the main note of the key.

Three of the most important forms of baroque instrumental music were:

a) The dance suite. Baroque people loved to dance and they loved to watch professional dancers perform. Even when just listening at concerts, they loved to hear dance music. Composers created works in which favourite dance pieces such as the allemande, courante, sarabande or gigue were grouped together in one key. Dance suites often began with an overture in the style of French operatic 6 overtures of the day. Handel's Water Music is a dance suite of this type.

b) The concerto grosso is a work usually in four movements (slow, fast, slow, fast) in which several soloists play in dialogue with a large orchestral accompaniment. Handel's Concerto Grosso Op. 3 No. 6 (track 7) is a work of this kind.

c) The solo concerto is usually in three movements (fast, slow, fast). Here a virtuosic soloist alternates with the full orchestra. Composers often wrote these works for themselves to perform; this was the case with the concertos in Vivaldi's The Four Seasons.

Baroque Acting and Gesture

Opera Atelier has developed an extremely detailed and recognizable performance style based on the gestural/oratorical technique of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and we have had the privilege of an ongoing experimentation and collaboration with some of North America's most gifted performers.

The same period has allowed us an in-depth practical study of types of gesture (ie. Emphatic, imitative, affective, gestures of address and complex gestures) coupled with an ongoing examination of primary source material dealing with baroque acting style, ie:

-books about acting by actors, directors and teachers: books on classical rhetoric dealing with delivery of both secular and sacred oratory; books of physiognomic studies – ie., Giovanni Battista della Porta's Della Fisionomia dell 'Uomo and LeBrun's Conférence sur L'expression Generale et Particulière.

-official documents including annotated prompter's copies, annotated singers' parts and annotated conductors' scores: iconographic sources including Paintings, engravings, and sculpture, etc.

For those of you who are new to our productions, the following information will be of interest.

Based on classical oratorical techniques, Baroque acting was composed of a language of gesture designed to bring before the eyes of the spectator the verse and figures of speech it accompanied. One acted by the word rather than the pervading emotions. Like the text, gestures were coherently and gracefully linked to provoke the maximum response from the spectator.

It was not important that the actors experience genuine emotions themselves, rather by taking the correct gesture and the ideal inflection of voice at the right moment the actor would elicit an emotional response from his or her audience, while staying in control of technique. The Baroque actor was not required to shed real tears, rather, to cause the audience to weep.

Essays in classical oratory by Quintilian and Cicero provided a model for Baroque actors, as did postures and gestures taken from both classical and contemporary paintings and sculpture. The practice of the singer Nicolini is described in the *Tatler* as follows:

“There is scarce a beautiful posture in an old statue which he does not plant himself in, as the different circumstances of the story give occasion for it.”

Goethe adds:

“An actor should properly also study with a sculptor and painter. For in representing a Greek hero, it is necessary for him to study carefully the antique sculptures which have come down to us, to impress upon his memory the natural grace of their sitting, standing and walking.

This practice is of enormous help in understanding and reconstructing Baroque acting technique. It gives us exact information about the physical details of the gestures and postures which were used by leading artists.

The gesture for both rhetoric and opera fell into the following categories: emphatic gestures – in which the actor enforces the important words by a gesture; imitative gestures – in which the actor imitates, for example, the gentleness of a scene he talks about with a gentle gesture; affective or express gestures – in which the actor expresses a particular passion such as fear or grief with specific gestures.

In addition, there were:

- gestures of address
- preparatory and terminating gestures
- complex gestures
- indicative gestures

Some of the gestures can be combined to form a complex gesture expressing two or more meanings at once. Each of them can be performed in such a way as merely to suggest its meaning rather than to make it explicit.

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, actors were experimenting with more “naturalistic” acting techniques as the delicate emotional restraint of the Rococo gave way to the intense self-examination of the Romantic era.

Great actors and writers such as David Garrick, Mademoiselle Clairon, Voltaire, and Diderot were advocating and experimenting with a less declamatory speaking style along with costuming which was more historically informed. These experiments had their advocates and detractors. Goethe, for one, after experimenting with “naturalism” on stage, returned unequivocally to the “classical” style of acting in later years.

Baroque gesture and rhetorical speech patterns, in fact, prevailed on the European stage right through the nineteenth century. Contemporary descriptions, even recordings, of the great Sarah Bernhardt, bear witness to this fact.

Dance in The Return of Ulysses

Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulysses* premiered in Venice in 1640 and is one of the last Italian operas to completely embody the ideals of the originators of opera as a revival of ancient Greek theatre. Dancing is a component of this revival which was to integrate the arts into an expressive storytelling medium.

Monteverdi includes several opportunities for dancing in *The Return of Ulysses*, particularly the entertainment which is forced upon Penelope by her suitors. The styles of choreography are based upon late Renaissance and early Baroque sources as the 1640 premiere dictates. The idea of percussive

movement – stamping, clapping, castanets and finger cymbals was very popular during the 17th century, especially when a note of exoticism was required. (Monteverdi's score calls for some of the dances to be in a "Moorish" style). Huge leaps and beaten steps including entrechats and cabrioles are clearly described for male dancers of this period as are some simple lifts. The Greek setting of the story is reflected by the frieze like movement for the Naiads who guard Ulysses' treasure at the bidding of Minerva. The finale, which unites all characters onstage in a wonderful closing dance was traditional in England and France as well as Italy at this time; indeed in some instances, the audience would have joined in as well.

Re-Creating the Period

The proscenium stage that we know today was invented in the 17th century. Before this time theatrical events took place out of doors on movable carts and platforms or in the banqueting and reception halls of palaces and great homes. Opera as we know it was invented in this period as an entertainment for rich and powerful patrons wealthy enough to commission these spectacular and frequently allegorical dramas set to music. An increasing demand for these entertainments led to the creation of public theatres with seating arranged around a stage that very much resemble a picture in a frame. The scenic designer of these productions (who often worked as an architect, engineer and painter) treated the stage as his canvas and carved and gilded proscenium as his frame.

Part of the challenge in designing the various locations specified in an opera was creating the illusion of depth on a frequently shallow stage. We need only to look at the painting of the period to discover the inspiration for theatrical designer of the day. Artists since the renaissance had perfected the study of perspective drawing and painting. These principles were used by stage designers to create painted scenery that reduced in scale as it approached the back of the stage. This "forced perspective" was employed on painted backdrops, side panels that slid back and forth into the wings and borders that were raised or lowered from the ceiling. Using these elements the designer could create changeable scenes of pastoral landscapes, turbulent seas, cloudscares (often people with gods and goddesses) or virtually any desired location. Wooden clockwork machinery operated by stagehands was concealed below or above the stage and moved the scenery and provided the means for many special effects; hand cranked waves could churn a painted sea, chariots flew through the air on ropes and demons and dragons ascended from hell through trap doors. All theatres at the time were lit with candles or oil lamps and it is not surprising that most eventually burnt to the ground. A famous and perfectly preserved example with original machines and scenery is the Drottningholm Court Theatre in Sweden.

Opera Atelier is a company devoted to the production of period inspired opera, ballet and drama. As part of a creative team, the set designer's task is to understand and visually interpret the style and technology of the baroque stage. While never recreating historical designs, Opera Atelier produces original sets and costumes inspired by these early sources.

Having researched the conventions of the early stage, the designer must then study the story line of the opera by reading the libretto and determining the changes of location from scene to scene. At this point he or she must consult with the director about and overall visual concept for the piece.

Ultimately, a good design is one that is both beautiful and functional. To ensure that it works in conjunction with the movements on stage required that the designer work closely with the director from the start. Drawings, painting and scale models are employed to establish the mood of each scene and to determine entrances, exits, and special effects. Generally a complete miniature set is created in advance so that the designer, director, carpenters and scenic artists can consult on the practicality and cost of the design. The designer must work with a technical director who oversees the construction and installation of the set, a lighting designer who will help create the changing atmosphere on the stage and prop makers who build furniture and objects handled by the singers or actors.

The job of the set designer is a complex one that requires not only an imagination and artistic flare but also an interest in research, a varied set of technical skills and the ability to work collaboratively. For Opera Atelier's designer, Gerard Gauci "the great reward of this work is in the witnessing the transformation of my small scale painting and models into a bigger than life world full of light, colour and music on the stage."

A Convincing Fight!

What is stage fighting? It is exactly that, fighting for the stage; but what does that mean?

Perhaps we should start with what it is not. It is not fencing. Although a stage fight should look as though it is being made up before your eyes, it is, in reality, a very carefully choreographed set of movements similar to a dance. Stage fighting is sometimes referred to as 'combat mime' because fighters must work together to create an illusion of spontaneity, an illusion of danger for the audience while doing their best to protect each other from any real danger of injury.

Beginning in 1989 a style of stage fighting has been developed for Opera Atelier by Fight Director Jennifer Parr to match the extremely detailed and elegant performance style of the singers and the dancers directed and choreographed by OA's Co-Artistic directors Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Zingg. In the same way that the acting and dancing of the company is historically informed, the stage fighting is very carefully based on historical sources, most importantly on arms treatises (how-to manuals) of the time and on theatrical records, paintings, and engravings.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the 'Science of Arms' or 'Art of Self Defense' was an inescapable part of the life of every man of the upper classes. Not only was the ability to handle a sword necessary for war but it was also fashionable. Duels were constantly fought throughout this period although they were against the law, and boys would be taught from a young age 'the art of elegantly despatching a neighbour to the next world.' Some girls managed to share their brothers' lessons, or otherwise learned the skills necessary to protect their own honour; some even fought duels, but they were the exception not the rule.

When a stage fight is choreographed for an Opera Atelier production it draws on this wealth of historical material and then goes beyond the reality. A fight is always a 'spectacle', a display of virtuoso skill with the apparent chance of danger similar to a trapeze or tightrope act. At the same time a stage fight must also be something more than spectacle; it must tell the audience something important about the characters involved, and must advance, or give a new twist to, the story.

The process of creating a stage fight always begins with the libretto and music of the opera and with research into the historical period. The next step involves in-depth discussions between the director and fight director to determine the role of the fight in the director's overall vision of the opera, followed by discussions of set and costume design and casting. The fight director then prepares the choreography of the fight and teaches the performers (singers and/or dancers) working constantly with the director.

Opera Atelier stage fights have sometimes featured the use of broadsword and spear but usually focus on the rapier, either single rapier, or in combination with a second rapier, dagger, buckler, or cape – typical weapon combinations of the period. The first Opera Atelier production to feature stage fights was the gala performance of *The Loves of Mars and Venus* in 1990. Since then many more fights have been featured in productions ranging from Mozart's ever popular *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, to the exciting 'new baroque' performances of Charpentier's *Medée*, Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* and Lully's *Persée* (on both stage and film).

Make-up, a history

Cosmetics have been used almost as long as there have been people to use them. Face painting is mentioned in Ezekiel 23 v. 40 of the Old Testament and samples of eyeshadow have been found in ancient Egyptian burial sites which date back to 10,000 B.C.

One of the early European cosmetics was called "woad" which was a blue paint used by the Picts and Celts as war paint and also for personal decoration. Romanized Celts adopted the cosmetic practices of their conquerors. They whitened their faces with chalk and white lead, rubbed tartar from their teeth using pumice coloured their fingernails with fat made from sheep's blood and bleached their dark hair blond.

During the Middle Ages the strict influence of the church strongly discouraged the use of cosmetics, seeing it as the work of the devil. Noble women who wanted to achieve the fashionable pale complexion applied white powder and water soluble paint. However, the prevalent practice was to use leeches to drain the blood from their cheeks. Lipstick and rouge were used strictly by women of bad reputation.

By the time Elizabeth I ascended to the throne of England in the 16th century, the use of lotions and cosmetics was widespread among both ladies and gentlemen. They would moisturize, powder, paint and perfume their skin all the time. Some of the popular beauty treatments of this period included using rosemary water for their hair, elderflower ointment for their skin, sage for whitening their teeth, bathing in wine and applying masks made from egg whites and honey to smooth away wrinkles.

Many of the preparations that were used, unbeknownst to the users, were harmful to their health and in many cases, caused their death. Some of these more dangerous concoctions were white lead which was applied in multiple coats to whiten their complexions; rouge made from mercuric sulphide; mercury sublimate for blemishes and a hair dye made of lead, sulphur, quicklime and water to imitate the Queen's naturally red hair.

Bathing was not popular during this period. As a result perfumes, first introduced by the returning crusaders in the 1400's, were a welcome relief from people's natural body odor. Herb scents such as rosemary, myrrh, frankincense, orange rose and spice fragrances became very popular.

During the Baroque era there was an explosion in cosmetic indulgences. Both women and men used white lead paint, applied very thickly, on their faces, coloured eyeshadows, made from minerals, were used excessively, eyebrows and eyelids were heavily lined with black kohl and beauty marks were or patches were strategically placed on the face.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the various European royal courts would stage small operas and dances. The stage was lit by candle light which created many shadows and cast an orange hue on the faces of the performers. This made it difficult to see their facial expressions. The performers would apply a thick white foundation on their faces, then they would draw dark outlines and heavy rouging was applied to the lips and cheeks.

In Mozart's time it was fashionable to cast exotic looking characters in their operas. While Monostatos is meant to be a Moor, black singer/performers were rarely available so that black make up needed to be used on the performer's face and body. In all likelihood a black kohl powder or black kohl mixed with animal fat or oil was used to create the skin colour.

Today we use water based or cream based foundations which are applied with a sponge to create the same effect.

Costume Design - The Fashion of the Court

Opera was an art form that was created in the early 17th century as an entertainment for the wealthy aristocrats. In these early ballets and operas, the performers as well as the audience, were the cultured, educated nobles who were well schooled in singing, dancing and deportment.



Women would perform in their most beautiful gowns that were lavishly decorated with feathers and gems. Additional embellishments such as flowers, leaves, shells, appliqued designs would further represent the character. However, in almost all cases, the silhouette of the costume with its corseted bodice was the same as the gown that was currently fashionable. So, the study of women's costuming in the Baroque starts off with a study of the fashion of the day, most particularly the fashion of the Court.



These days, designing costumes for men from the 17th and 18th centuries is not quite so straightforward. The stories that inspired Baroque operas were the Greek and Roman myths and legends and were generally of two types – the 'pastorale' which told the tale of the loves and misadventures of shepherds and shepherdesses, and the 'heroic' which told the tale of the loves and misadventures of the Gods and Goddesses. In the pastorale, the men would wear soft flowing shirts with vests or jackets, often in pastel or floral colors. In armor with strong shoulder detail, wide jewel encrusted belts with tabs at front and sides. A cape, helmet and plumes would complete the ensemble.

The skirt of this garment or 'tonnelet' was mid thigh length, very full and supported by tulle or a whaleboned hoop. To our modern eyes, this silhouette would look like a tutu, but in that era, it was an elegant and masculine look.

Sources of Information for Opera Atelier's Costume Designer

As a costume designer creating in the style of a particular period, the first response is to turn to original source material. Fortunately there is a wealth of information. Inigo Jones who designed masques for the Stuart court in the early 17th century, left detailed descriptions of his costumes as well as his sets. His sketches include notes about colours of fabric, threads and sequins as well as cost of materials. Daniel Rabel, who designed costumes for the court of Louis 13th, had an atelier for aspiring designers. Several hundred of his designs have been published in a book by the Victoria and Albert Museum, and 45 original drawings have been acquired by the Art Gallery of Ontario.

In the 18th century, costume designer, Boquet designed for the Paris Opera and dozens of his designs are on display there for anyone who visits the Paris Opera to see today. An equally valuable resource are the paintings of that period. From Boquet we learn how the fashionable men and women dressed.



From painters Fragonard, Boucher, Watteau and Lancret, we learn about shot (one colour going one way, one colour going another way) silk and watery moire (French fabric). Their palette was pastel: gray, citron, pistachio and peach. Tiepolo, a famous painter in the 17th century, uses the dark coppery browns, maroons and purples of the early Baroque and shows us how the muscles of the torso influenced the design of armor for men. Porcelain figurines in

collections like that of the Gardiner Museum tell us more about contemporary dress, particularly of the

characters in the Commedia dell'Arte. There are, in addition, a multitude of books on the practical aspects of costume building and of corset and hoop construction.

In creating costumes for modern theatre productions, it is very important that the designer understand what is required of the performer on stage. Will the movements of the singer or dancer be restricted by the costume? This may influence types of fabrics chosen; gussets (allow free movement of the arms without altering the fit of the garment) must be planned for the armhole or crotch. Will there be quick changes is another aspect considered by the costume designer. In Opera Atelier's production of Gluck's *Orfeo & Eurydice* (97), some of the dancers had 5 complete costume changes.

Adapting for today's performers can be made, but must be planned well ahead. For example, velcro can be used instead of lacing in a corset. The top and bottom of a costume can be sewn together so the artists can dress the one piece quickly. In choosing fabrics and materials, Opera Atelier's costume designer is always conscious of the final weight of the costumes. It is no easy matter to carry a 20-30 lb. weight for 3 hours - much less sing and dance effortlessly in it! A singer once told me about having to wear a costume made of upholstery fabric. It looked beautiful, but the fabric had been rubberized on the inside and she felt like she was wrapped in plastic! Under the hot lights it was unbearable and another costume had to be found. Fortunately for Opera Atelier performers, the fabrics of choice are light weight silks and satins and lames.