

Ottavio Rinuccini & Claudio Monteverdi

ARIANNA

a la recherche

con le musiche di Andrew Lawrence-King

OPERA

OMNIA

After killing the Minotaur on Crete, Prince **Teseo** abandons his fiancée, Princess **Arianna**, on a solitary island, and sails off to Athens to claim his kingdom. She laments, but is comforted by friendly **Fishermen** and rescued by **Bacco**.

PROLOGO

Apollo descends from heaven to earth, not as a hero with weapons, but with the lyre of love. Hear the sighs of a woman betrayed on a solitary shore, an antique Greek scene with new music.

ACT I Scene i

The island of Dia (Naxos)

Venere (Venus) tells **Amore** (Cupid) that Teseo (Theseus) will arrive this evening, on his way to Athens after killing the monstrous Minotaur in Crete. Although he brings with him his fiancée, Arianna, he plans to abandon her on the beach and sail away during the night. **Amore** wants to rekindle Teseo's love for Arianna, but **Venere** has another plan. Tomorrow, the winds will push Bacco's (Bacchus) ship towards the island, and **Amore** should make him and Arianna fall in love.

Trumpets sound as **Teseo's** ship arrives. He and his soldiers land, together with **Arianna**. **Venere** descends into the sea. **Amor** makes himself invisible, and remains on the beach.

ACT I Scene ii

Teseo's Soldiers celebrate their King's victory. **Teseo** and **Consigliero** (his Counsellor) remain ashore with **Arianna**: the **Soldiers** wish them goodnight and return to the ships.

ACT I Scene iii

Arianna is sad to leave behind her native Crete and her family. **Teseo** reassures her with promises of her future life as Queen of Athens. They seek shelter for the night in the cabin of a friendly **Pescatore** (Fisherman).

The **Pescatori** (Fishermen) sing to the stars. It's time for some to go fishing, whilst others stay to sing all night. Just as the stars should never be veiled, so earthly love should remain constant and not fade.

ACT II

Teseo wonders how he can bear to sail away to Athens, and abandon Arianna on the beach. **Consigliero** argues that his love is impure and unworthy of a King. And what will the Athenians say when they see some strange woman, the daughter of an enemy King, the half-sister of the Minotaur to whom so many of their children were sacrificed? Teseo resolves to leave.

A **Messaggiero** (Messenger) arrives to announce that the ships are ready to depart. **Teseo** leaves, with a heavy heart. The **Pescatori** note his troubled mind, whilst they celebrate the coming dawn in endless song.

ACT III

Arianna fears some future torment. **Una Pescatrice** (a Fisherwoman) also feels forebodings of disaster. **Dorilla** (Arianna's companion) tries to reassure her that Teseo will return soon.

Dorilla asks the returning **Pescatori** for news, and they tell of the Messaggiero speaking to the two cavaliers, but report no noise of the fleet departing from the harbour. **Arianna** feels hopeful, but still uncertain as she bids the **Pescatori** goodnight.

The two groups of **Pescatori** share their knowledge of the night's events, and realise that Teseo must have left already, abandoning Arianna. In chorus, they praise their simple life according to Amore's laws, and condemn Teseo's ambitious pride: once in Athens he will curse his evil plan.

ACT IV Scene i

Nunzio Primo (the first Envoy) rages against Teseo, and the **Pescatori** sympathise. He narrates how Teseo left secretly in silence, and Arianna cried and shouted for him to return. But all her laments were in vain, and she threw herself into the sea, from where some Fishermen rescued her.

The **Pescatori** wonder what will happen to Arianna now, and prefer their simple life to her hopes and fears. Then **Nunzio** sees her approaching.

ACT IV Scene ii

Arianna laments, rejecting the comfort offered by the listening **Pescatori**. She begs Teseo to return, but he is bound for glory in Athens whilst she remains alone. Will he leave her to die like this? **Arianna** calls on the winds to sink Teseo's ship, but then regrets her words. She resolves to die, and bids farewell to the world.

Dorilla tries to dissuade her, when a strange fanfare is heard. Perhaps Teseo has returned, though **Arianna** scarcely dares to hope. They go to the harbour.

The **Pescatrice** prophesies that when the truth is revealed, Arianna will again be happy. The chorus of **Pescatori** remembers mythical journeys to hell and back, a loving wife and hero who took the place of her husband. May Amore now win another trophy by bringing back Teseo!

ACT V Scene i

Nunzio Secondo (the second Envoy) rejoices at Amore's success in uniting lovers. The **Pescatori** ask what happened: it was not Teseo who sailed into harbour, but Bacco. He sees Arianna, she tells her story, and they fall in love. In eloquent silence, he offers his hand in marriage, and she accepts. **Amore** becomes visible to mortals, and the heavens rejoice.

ACT V Scene ii

The **Soldiers of Bacchus** invite Apollo to honour the wedding day, as **Bacco** enters in triumph. **Amore** shows his glory. Arianna rejoices: blessed is the heart that has a god for comfort.

Venere emerges from the sea to bless the bride. **Giove** (Jove) welcomes **Arianna** into heaven. **Bacco** promises her eternal joy. Earthly and heavenly choirs unite to celebrate the royal wedding.