CORONIDE, chamber opera based on texts by Pastore Arcade and Publius Ovidius Naso

In the summer of 1731, following the order of the Cardinal Schrattenbach, the opera *Coronide* was staged in the Chateau Kroměříž. The only part that has survived is the libretto, supposedly written by the "*un Pastore Arcade*" ("Shepherd of Arcadia"). Two years ago, Tomáš Hanzlík, the director of the **Baroque 2000** festival and the artistic leader of the *Ensemble Damian*, decided to revive this baroque text. He then approached me with a request to write a new opera based on the extant text. I found this idea fascinating but the scope of the libretto as well as its form pointed to other directions. For a long time, I hesitated about a possible approach to the baroque text, whether to imitate a baroque opera or merely use its form as a point of departure. Finally, I decided to "browse through the opera" and enhance its impact by taking a shortcut through its original dramatic line. I chose the most impressive passages and supplemented them with one-sentence commentaries from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The baroque libretto thus works as a basis for telling a mythological story of the dramatic fate of Coronis (Coronide).

Coronide's Story

The God Apollo loves Coronis and Coronis loves Apollo (1. *Coronide ed Apollo*). However, a raven tells Apollo that it has seen his nymph with a "young lad" (4. *Corvus tendebat ad dominum*, 5. *And Found Him Out*). The librettist Arcadus calls the young man Daphnis and his partner Apidamia. Her love for Daphnis, however, remains unconsummated. (3. *Qual va tortorella amorosa*). After learning of Coronis's supposed infidelity, the angry Apollo pierces her chest with a silver arrow (7. *The God Was Wroth*), without doubting the raven's message for a single moment. He regrets his abrupt act immediately but it is too late now to save Coronis's life. The nymph dies but before her death she manages to tell Apollo: "Two in One Are Now Dying" (*Due in una moriemur*, 9. *Mora quel Perfida*). At that moment, Apollo learns that Coronis is expecting a baby, their son Asclaepius. Although the motive of the baby is absent in Arcadus's text, I decided to supplement it with this key line of Ovid's. Arcadus's ending of the opera is a lament by Apidamia and Apollo over the demise of Coronis and Daphnis (in the original libretto, Apollo kills both Coronis and Daphnis). Eventually, the concluding chorus/morality reminds us that grief is no longer necessary. I myself kept to the principle of a graded lament. Both the concluding parts before the final morality therefore represent a double lament. In the former (10. *Coronide è morta*), a bass aria with a single text "Coronis is dead" appears. The solo bass part appears intentionally for the first time: the text can be sung by both Coronis's son Asclaepius and her alleged lover Daphnis. I kept this ambiguity in the last lament as well (11. *Di vita usci*), in which Apollo and Daphnis/Asclaepius sing of his horrifying deed. It is only the final morality that changes the expression of the lament, for everyone to be reminded of the transience of love and the ease with which it can be betrayed.

Vít Zouhar

Ensemble Damian

The ensemble gradually shaped up from the Collegium Musicum of the students at the Department of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts and at the Department of Musical Education of the Pedagogical Faculty at Palacky University in Olomouc. In 1995, it made its first public appearance under the name of *Ensemble Damian*. In its full scope, it reaches the size of a chamber orchestra including the winds and a chamber choir. Its singers characteristically use straight voices with natural timbres unburdened with the vibrato and other operatic conventions. The *Ensemble Damian* applies similar techniques to instrument playing, following the practice of an authentic interpretation of ancient music grounded in historical research. This does not mean that the ensemble sets limits on its forms of expression; on the contrary, in the interpretation of modern contemporary music, which forms an equal part of its repertoire, rich new potentials as well as the possibility of escaping traditional stereotypes of interpretation present themselves to the ensemble. The *Ensemble Damian* endeavours to abandon the classical patterns of concert presentation and composes its programmes into thematic wholes. Recently it has produced several staged performances of baroque as well as contemporary cantatas, oratories and operas.

Tomáš Hanzlík

CORONIDE – a collage by V.Z. of texts by Patsore Arcade: *Coronide* (1731), and Publius Ovidius Naso: *Metamorphoseon – Liber 2* (*Metamorphoses by Ovid*, translated into English by Sir Samuel Garth and John Dryden).

1. Coronide ed Apollo (chorus)
Coronis loves Apollo,
the raven says, however,
that she is unfaithful

2. Felice chi prova (chorus)
Happy are those who experience
the bonds of love
A lover will find
Greatness in any lover
Catch the mane
of plans
cajoling,
Rose souls,
let a fair marriage
descend upon us.
Let your torch shine
with the divine will to peace.
In comely appearance
love is born between roses
Whoever stands close by
will find the unsettling mystery,
whoever closes down upon himself will
feel pain.

3. Qual va (Apidamia)
As an amorous dove
flies from one fence to another
looking for a sweet friend,
I walk from one beach to another
but the encounter eludes me.

4. Corvus ad dominum tendebat (chorus)
The raven rushes to his master
to divulge the blame.
There is no need
for that traitor to peck.

5. And Found Him Out (chorus)

6. Aprite, aprite (Apollo)
Open, open,
ominous abysses,
open your entrails
to my wrath
Hear, hear,
my moaning.
I am too disconsolate
to bear
my pain.
Coronide is fickle
everything tells me she is someone's
mistress.
You bestowed a fatal blow on me.
Do not laugh
this is all true.

7. The God Was Wroth (chorus)
The God was wroth
the colour left his look,
the wreath his head, the harp his hand
forsook
Silver bow
lodg'd an arrow in the tender breast
(transl. by Dryden and Garth)

The face of the God.
His soul heaved and boiled with anger.
He took out his bow.
The God's wrath.

8. Everything Tells Me (Coronide, later Apidamia)
Everything tells me
that I am unhappy
that I am no longer your life
neither your virtue any longer
I will die before I can see
the victorious soul.
Do not tell me you do not love him
that you do not care for him and do not
desire him
for I know the truth too well
the fever that inflames the breast
is that of love, it is a sweet
emotion
the more mysterious the stronger.

9. Mora quell Perfida (chorus)
May the treacherous one die
the one that betrayed me
and stole
my treasure.
Extreme pain
will be caused
to the traitor.
"Two in One Are Now Dying."

10. Coronide è morta (Daphnis)
Coronide is dead.

11. Di vita usci (Apollo and Dafni)
My Coronis
you are no longer alive
Streams and springs
forests and mountains
weep over my
abominable crime
owing to which the beautiful
shepherdess of mine
abandoned this world.
And a dark veil
will cover the heavens.
It has been put out,
that living torch
which set fire to the day.

12. Tutte quelle (chorus)
All those that are beautiful
love only out of vanity.
Much more than a constant bond
they seek splendor, beauty only.

Translated by Petr Brabec