

Gaetano Donizetti - Lucrezia Borgia (2000)

Written by bluesever

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1. Prologo 2. Atto 1 3. Atto 2 Lucrezia Borgia - Renée Fleming Gennaro - Marcello Giordani Maffio Orsini - Stephanie Blythe Don Alfonso - Dean Peterson Jacopo Liveretto - Martin Dillon Don Apostolo Gazella - Charles Robert Stephens Ascanio Petrucci - Christopher Mooney Oloferno Vitellozzo - Brian Nedvin Gubetta - Michael Corvino Rustighello - Justin Vickers Astolfo - Luiz-Ottavio Faria Un servo - Bryan Register Un coppiere - Don Barnum Opera Orchestra of New York Ars Musica Chorale Eve Queler - conductor, Carnegie Hall, live recording 2000.

Lucrezia Borgia is a melodramma, or opera, in a prologue and two acts by Gaetano Donizetti. Felice Romani wrote the Italian libretto after the play by Victor Hugo, in its turn after the legend of Lucrezia Borgia. Lucrezia Borgia was first performed on 26 December 1833 at La Scala, Milan with Lelande and Pedrazzi. While not performed as regularly as Donizetti's more popular operas, Lucrezia's aria "Com'è bello", Orsino's Brindisi "Il segreto per esser felice", the tenor's "Di pescator ignobile", and the bass aria "Vieni, la mia vendetta!" are all very effective and famous melodic moments from the opera and have been performed and recorded frequently.

Synopsis

Time: Early 16th century Place: Venice and Ferrara

Prologue

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The Palazzo Grimani in Venice

Gennaro and his friends celebrate on the brightly lit terrace, in front of which lies the Giudecca canal. The friends' conversation turns to Don Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, to whose house they will be travelling the next day, and to his wife, the infamous Lucrezia Borgia. On hearing Lucrezia's name, Orsini tells of how Gennaro and he, alone in a forest, were warned by a mysterious old man to beware her and the entire Borgia family. Professing his boredom with Orsini's tale Gennaro wanders off and falls asleep nearby. His friends are invited to rejoin the festivities, and he is left alone. A gondola appears and a masked woman steps onto the terrace. She hurries over to the sleeping Gennaro and observes him with affection. (*Com'è bello! Quale incanto in quel volto onesto e altero!*) She kisses his hand, he wakes and is instantly struck by her beauty. He expresses his love for her and sings of his childhood as an orphan brought up by fishermen. He adds that he loves dearly the mother he has never met. (*Di pescatore ignobile esser figliuol credei.*) The others return and instantly recognise her as Lucrezia Borgia, listing in turn the members of their families she has killed to Gennaro's horror.

Act 1

Ferrara

The Duke, believing Gennaro to be Lucrezia's lover, plots his murder with his servant Rustighello (*Vieni: la mia vendetta è mediatata e pronta.*) Gennaro and his companions leave the house for a party and pass the Duke's palace with its large gilded coat of arms reading 'Borgia'. Keen to show his contempt for the Borgia family, Gennaro removes the initial 'B', leaving the obscene 'Orgia' ("orgy").

In the palace, Lucrezia is shown into the Duke's chamber. Having seen the defaced crest, she demands death for the perpetrator, not knowing that it is Gennaro. The Duke orders Gennaro to be brought before her and accuses him of staining the noble name of Borgia, a crime to which he readily confesses. Lucrezia, horrified, attempts to excuse the insult as a youthful prank, but Don Alfonso accuses Lucrezia of infidelity, having observed her meeting with Gennaro in Venice. In a scene full of drama and tension, she denies any impropriety, but he demands the

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prisoner's death and forces her to choose the manner of Gennaro's execution. Pretending to pardon him, the Duke offers Gennaro a glass of wine and he swallows it. After a stunning trio (Guai se ti sfugge un moto, Se ti tradisce un detto!) the Duke leaves and Lucrezia hurries to Gennaro, giving him an antidote to the poison the Duke has mixed with the wine. He drinks, and in a last duet, she implores him to flee the city and her husband. (Bevi e fuggi ... te'n prego, o Gennaro!)

Act 2

The palace of the Princess Negroni

Ignoring Lucrezia's advice, Gennaro attends a party at the palace, swearing never to be parted from his friend Orsini. Orsini leads the party in a brindisi or drinking song (Il segreto per esser felici) and they drink. Lucrezia enters and announces that in revenge for their insults in Venice she has poisoned their wine and arranged five coffins for their bodies. She has hitherto believed that Gennaro fled Ferrara on her advice, and is thus dismayed when he steps forward and announces that she has poisoned a sixth. Orsini, Liverotto, Vitellozzo, Petrucci and Gazella fall dead. Gennaro seizes a dagger and attempts to kill Lucrezia, but she stops him by revealing that he is in fact her son. Once again she asks him to drink the antidote, but this time he refuses, choosing to die with his friends. In a final cabaletta (Era desso il figlio mio,) Lucrezia mourns her son and expires.

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