

Mozart - La clemenza di Tito (Drottningholm 2013)

Written by bluesever

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1. Akt / 2. Akt II Cast: Tito - Richard Croft (tenor) Vitellia - Annemarie Kremer (soprano) Sesto -Katija Dragojevic (mezzo-soprano) Servilia - Luciana Mancini (mezzo-soprano) Publio -Markus Schwartz (bass-baritone) The Drottningholm Theatre Orchestra Members of the Swedish Radio Choir Mark Tatlow – conductor Schlosstheater Drottningholm Stockholm, August 11-24 2013.

Do you remember the pop song "I Would Do Anything for Love (But I Won't Do That)," a '90s Grammy-winner by Meat Loaf? The song's title, with its love-struck message, could easily sum up the plotline of Mozart's opera *La Clemenza di Tito* -- but only if you get rid of "(But I Won't Do That)."

The opera's lusty story, set in ancient Rome, features one character who really will do anything to bolster his love life, and another who's more than willing to egg him on. Sesto is a young man in love. Vitellia, the object of his desire, takes full advantage. She's determined to marry Tito, the emperor -- so determined that when Tito chooses another woman, Vitellia persuades Sesto to burn down the entire city of Rome, hoping the emperor will be roasted alive in the process.

The scheme almost works, but not quite. Tito survives, then lives up to his reputation for kindness and benevolence when he learns of the plot and pardons the would-be assassins.

Mozart composed *La Clemenza di Tito* for festivities surrounding the coronation of a new Bohemian king. The ceremony was scheduled for Sept. 6, 1791 — just three months before Mozart's death. The composer got the commission at the last minute and wrote the opera in a whirlwind of activity, even farming out some of its recitatives to an assistant. He took the libretto

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from the work of Pietro Metastasio, a prolific librettist who had written Clemenza about 60 years earlier.

The story of a wise and kindhearted emperor was the perfect vehicle to honor a newly minted monarch. Metastasio's libretto had already been set by more than 40 composers. When Mozart got ahold of it, he, in his own words, "reduced it to a proper opera." In other words, he made it a lot shorter.

Mozart also did something else at least as significant. The aging text pretty much demanded the time-worn dramatic structure of opera seria. Still, despite a libretto and format that were decidedly long in the tooth, the resulting opera is mature Mozart at its finest, shot through with startling innovations and stunning beauty. It turned out to be the last opera he would compose.

On World of Opera, host Lisa Simeone presents La Clemenza di Tito from the 2013 Drottningholm Opera Festival, at the historic Drottningholm Court Theater in Stockholm. Tenor Richard Croft stars as the magnanimous Emperor Tito, with soprano Annemarie Kremer as Vitellia, the woman determined to either have Tito, or see him dead. --- worldofopera.org

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