

ORIONE

Opera in a Prologue and three Acts

Libretto by: Walter Zidaric
freely taken by the comedy “Orione” by Ercole Luigi Morselli (1910)

Music by: Simone Fermani

Cast of Characters

<i>ORIONE</i>	<i>Tenor</i>
<i>MATUSIO, a charlatan posing as a fortune teller</i>	<i>Baryton</i>
<i>IREO, innkeeper, father of Orion</i>	<i>Bass</i>
<i>TROCHILO, servant of Ireo</i>	<i>Baryton</i>
<i>ENOPIONE, King of Kios</i>	<i>Bass</i>
<i>MEROPE, daughter of Enopione</i>	<i>Soprano</i>
<i>NURSE of Merope</i>	<i>Mezzo soprano</i>
<i>MIRRINA, a young lady</i>	<i>Soprano</i>
<i>ZETO, eunuch, fortune teller</i>	<i>Contraltoist or Mezzo soprano “en travestì”</i>
<i>CISSIBIO, King Enopione’s favourite</i>	<i>Bass</i>
<i>The voice of LINO, a poet and musician</i>	<i>Tenor</i>

*Choir and appearances: Gods, Amazons, Sylphs, Servants, Bacchae servants,
Soldiers and Satyrs*

Ballet: Gods, Amazons, Sylphs

The scene is set in Mediterranean Greece at the time of the Gods

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ORCHESTRA SET

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
English horn
2 Clarinets in Bb
2 Bassoons

4 Horns in Fa
2 Trumpets in Sib
3 Trombones
Cimbasso or tuba

Timpani
Triangle
Cymbals
Bass drum

Harp

1st Violins
2nd Violins
Violas
Cellos
Double Basses

Preface and description of characters

by Walter Zidaric*

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and former director of the Department of Italian Studies at the University of Nantes

Based on the play of the same name by Hercules Luigi Morselli (1882-1921), a modern reworking of the Greek myth performed with great success at the Teatro Argentina in Rome in 1910, the libretto of *Orione* was written for the music of Maestro Simone Fermani. The libretto respects the plot and the Morsellian spirit but rewrites the Greek myth accentuating the comic-parodic side and uses "classic" styles of the Italian melodrama, with rhyme verses and accompanying recitatives. The "Greek" side of the subject is also accentuated by the presence of choruses in ancient Greek, an absolute novelty in contemporary Italian opera. The work is composed of a prologue and 3 acts, lasting 2 hours and 30.

Orion is a beautiful, powerful, invincible god of the Greek mythology, loved by all women and even courted by Diana; according to various versions of the myth, Orion, conscious of his beauty, his charm, his invincible strength, falls in love with Merope, the daughter of Enopion the King of Chio, but he is submitted to a series of tests aimed at eliminating him, because Enopion promised his daughter to the king of a nearby island. Orion passes all these trials a little like Hercules and to avenge the absence of Merope, hidden by her father, rapes the King's wife, the Queen, in front of the Court and the King himself. This act causes everyone to fall madly in love with Orion: the Queen, the King and even Merope!

After these events (and here our work begins, with the Prologue), Orion returns home to his adoptive father Ireo, an old innkeeper who lives in his inn waiting for the return of his son, with his servant Trochilo; Ireo and Trochilo are a somewhat like Don Giovanni and Leporello, inseparable, but always arguing.

As Orion arrives, longed and waited for by his father, appears at the inn a charlatan, Matusio, who is also one of the main characters of the work. Orion tells his story to Matusio who writes it down for posterity: and so we discover that Orion, whose name etymologically derives from "urine" was actually born from the mixed urine of three gods, Jupiter, Mercury and Neptune, who, to thank Ireo for his hospitality in his inn, asked him to make a wish; Ireo asked for a son to console his old age and to leave him his possessions: the three gods, then, urinated in a goatskin that was buried in the earth and after nine months Orion was born, who made the joy of Ireo during his childhood.

But the Earth's pregnancy was terrible, so Orion is convinced that his mother "Gea" (The Earth), sooner or later will avenge herself by sending a huge monster to defeat him.

The work is pervaded with various quid pro quos, various comic scenes of misunderstanding, with the charlatan Matusio posing as a soothsayer, with Cissibio, the eunuch adviser to King Enopion, also presumed soothsayer, and with Merope's nanny.

At the end of the story, the wedding between King Enopion's daughter and Orion is about to be celebrated: there is the wedding banquet, there are the dances of satyrs and bacchanals, and there appears in the kitchen a monster: in fact it is a very small scorpion that is immediately attacked with a bow and arrows by Orion. All the bystanders moved by obvious great pity ask him to pardon him: Orion asks the scorpion to kiss his foot and if he will, he will pardon him. Obviously the scorpion instead of kissing his foot stings him and the sting is fatal to

Orion: here is the revenge of his mother Gea, the Earth, who sent this little animal from her bowels. Orion dies the moment his wedding banquet is celebrated taking a tragic pose which is but a parodic posture. Dying, he asks his father Jupiter to turn him into a constellation, the constellation of Orion, with the trusty Sirius, the dog, and with the belt with the three lion

heads: a constellation that is visible in autumn after the harvest period and that sends hail, rains and storms to lash the earth in revenge.

The beauty, the strength, the power of Orion are defeated by a small animal: which, on the one hand, reveals that "Hubris", that is, the will of pride, excessiveness, the affront made to the gods, which Orion expresses through his request to the scorpion of an extreme tribute to his person, is punished by the gods, and on the other reveals that beauty, strength, invincibility do not count in man if they are not accompanied by intelligence and humility.

So here is an interesting myth, a very contemporary and present one, precisely in the demonstration of how fallible man is in fact, despite the external apparatus of beauty or fame or physical ability.

Description of characters

IREO (Bass) - Old man, adopted father of Orion. Simple, naive, good man who has always been afraid of women and never had any. Having received regally in his tavern Zeus, Mercurio and Nettuno, but without having recognized them, they give him a son, born from their urine and given birth from the earth. he grew up with maternal care and counted on Orion for his old age. Now he has been waiting for it for a long time, disconsolate, melancholy, while he continues to be the host.

TROCHILO (Baritone) - is the inseparable servant of Ireo; they are like an old couple, they are always fighting but for nonsense, and Trochilo is the only one who knows his master, who loves profoundly. Trochilo is anything but stupid and scents the crooks from afar, unlike the Ireo, willing to believe everything. A sort of shoulder, counterpoint to Ireo.

MATUSIO (Baritone) - is a charlatan who pretends to be a famous soothsayer. He never guesses one and is in search of glory, fame and even food! He tries to be clever to be able to take advantage of situations to his advantage but he is fundamentally a good man who can only deceive the most vulgar, in short, a harmless one. But he is the spokesperson of the playwright (Morselli) in the original drama: he is the one who enunciates the moral of the story, in short, he has a central role for the intimate understanding of the story, and he is lucid, as well as a bit cynical, with respect to nature some men.

ORIONE (Tenor) - son of Zeus, Mercurio, Nettuno and of the Earth and from these given to Ireo for having received them worthily in his inn; he is the hero, handsome, powerful, athletic but not very intelligent. An expression of the animal-like nature of man, of sensuality but veiled in adolescence, In short it has hardly grown in maturity. He has a lot of females and ends up having Merope, the daughter of the King of Arcadia, the only one who had refused him, shortly before dying during the wedding ceremony because of his act of pride against the gods, as a tragic , comic joke of fate.

MEROPE (Soprano) - daughter of King Enopione, a young romantic at first in love with a poet; he falls in love with Orion after having seen him, secretly, entertaining himself with his mother in a rather comical way while he was searching for her. Merope leaves in search of Orion with his nurse; she is full of fears but also of curiosity, she seems genuinely in love: she will meet him and marry him but she will lose him immediately.

Minor characters:

Mirrina (Soprano) - a young vain woman convinced by Matusio that she will marry the king of Thebes, but who dies under the arrows of Diana, jealous of Orion

Enopione (Bass) - the King of Arcadia, drunkard, good for nothing and at the orders of his wife Domale (who does not appear)

Cissibio (Bass) – A favorite of the King Enopione, wise and prudent

Zeto (Alto-male singer- or Mezzo soprano "en travesti") - eunuch, fortune-teller of the King, mischievous and superb

Merope's nurse (Mezzo soprano) - wise and crafty old woman;

The voice of Lino (Tenor, out of scene), a musician and poet loved by Merope.