

ALCINA

Paul Davenport Theatre, Western University
November 18 & 19, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.
and November 20 & 21 at 2 p.m.
Simone Luti, *music director*
Allison Grant, *stage director*

CAST

Thursday and Saturday

Alcina: Nicole Katerberg
Morgana: Julia LoRusso
Ruggiero: Kcenia Koutorjevski
Bradamante: Chiara Siraco
Oberta: Gabrielle De Grandmont
Oronte: Cameron Mazzei
Melisso: Nicholas Gryniowski

Friday and Sunday

Alcina: Michaela Chiste
Morgana: Alexandra Morgan
Ruggiero: Natalie Vong
Bradamante: Jadelyn Beukeboom
Oberta: Erica Simone
Oronte: Matthew Bermudez
Melisso: Renato Araujo

Supers: Chelsie Boccongelle, Christine Kuittinen, Elizabeth Petersen,
Laura Karkouti, Ottley Whitby, Yasmeen Abou-Marie

ORCHESTRA

Music director, Simone Luti
Assistant conductor, Connor O'Kane

Violini Primi

Menelaos Menelaou*
Ivan Li
Paul Baek

Celli

Ethan Allers +
Heather White

Continuo

Harpichord,
Connor O'Kane
Cello, Ethan Allers
Bassoon, Joseph Smith

Violini Secondi

Jillian Yang +
Frangel Lopez-Cesena
Jeanny Jung

Bass

Jude Melanson

Oboes

Mark Pinder+
Margaret Hancox

Collaborative pianists

Theodore Chow
Jin (Mijin) Kim
Connor O'Kane

Viole

Meika Sonntag +
Miriam Elsawi
Minji Lee

Bassoon

Joseph Smith

**concertmaster
+ principal*

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage director: Allison Grant
Assistant director: Mabel Wonnacott
Stage manager: Thiago Soares
Assistant stage managers: Briana Sutherland,
Jacqueline Georgopoulos, McKenna Mellon,
Meghan Taylor, Raymond Salgado-Tran
Lighting design: Bryan Hart

Lighting operator: Mabel Wonnacott
Props and scenery: Eric Bunnell
Costume designer and coordinator: Julie McGill
Costume assistant: Mabel Wonnacott
Surtitles: James Smith
Music director: Simone Luti
Theatre manager: Louis D'Alton

PRODUCTION NOTE

The story line of "Alcina" is taken from the 16th c. epic poem, "Orlando Furioso" by Ludovico Ariosto. In it he references, and some say he satirises, the epic chivalrous love poems of the 11th and 12th century. The whole world is Ariosto's setting in this long epic, including a trip to the moon. The characters include soldiers and witches, seers and lovers. There are wondrous animals; the flying horse or 'Hippogriff', and a magical sea monster called the 'Orc'. The story and characters have inspired dozens of operas, films, books and plays.

"Alcina" is one of Handel's five so-called "magic operas" - the others are "Orlando," "Rinaldo," "Teseo" and "Amadigi" - in which fantastical scenic transformations and other wild elements of stagecraft figure prominently.

Our production is set in modern day where we visit Alcina's Island to find Bradamante's beloved Ruggiero. Ruggiero has been magically 'enchanted' and forced to fall in love by the Sorceress, Alcina. She rules her island kingdom with elements of magic and science; a Sorceress as old as time. In common with female herbalists, medicine women, and scientists before her, she is called a "Sorceress" except that this woman actually has magical and mysterious powers as well as scientific knowledge that is secret and therefore suspect.

We present the Island simply, with a tree at centre and peopled by fantastic beasts who are Alcina's past lovers – they have been cast aside and magically transformed into beasts, trees and rocks. These creatures add an absurdist element to our production dressed in tuxes and serving in the Queen's household.

The male role of Alcina's lover Ruggiero would have been played by the leading castrati of Handel's time, so we employ the now common practice of females playing male characters. But in this story one of our most important characters, the lovely Bradamante, disguises herself as her brother, the soldier Ricciardo, for the first part of the opera. Confusion is bound to ensue.

Luckily the music explains all, as it speaks directly to the heart of each of us.

Allison Grant

The Characters:

Alcina: the Sorceress Queen.

Morgana: Sister to Alcina, and also a sorceress of some power.

Ruggiero: Bradamante's love, but now 'enchanted' by Alcina to love only her.

Bradamante: a strong woman searching for her lover Ruggiero, disguised as her brother "Ricciardo".

Oberta: a young girl cast up upon the island with her beloved Father, who is now missing.

Oronte: loyal to Alcina, her servant and protector. In love with Morgana.

Melisso: Companion to Bradamante and former teacher to Ruggiero.

The Beasts: Six former loves of Alcina.

SYNOPSIS

With her magical powers, the enchantress Alcina has transformed her desert island into a magnificent palace in a beautiful landscape to lure in her lovers. One of them is a warrior, Ruggiero, who has now abandoned his betrothed Bradamante. Bradamante (disguised as her brother, the soldier Ricciardo) and Ruggiero's friend and mentor Melisso, arrive on shore, with a magic ring, intent on breaking the spell that binds Ruggiero to Alcina and releasing her other captives who have been transformed into beasts. Morgana, Alcina's sister, greets them, falling madly in love with "Ricciardo", although she is to marry Oronte, the commander of Alcina's army.

The young Oberta, a guest on the island, is searching for her father Astolfo. Oberta asks Melisso and Bradamante to help her search; it is clear to them that he must have been changed into a wild beast, like many others.

When presented with a magic ring, Ruggiero finally sees the reality behind Alcina's magical landscape and frees himself from her influence. Melisso, Bradamante and Ruggiero then prepare to defeat Alcina's forces with the magic ring and the "Gorgonian shield" which is described in Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso" on which the Opera is based. Bradamante swears not to leave the island until all of Alcina's victims are released. Alcina notices that Ruggiero is slipping from her grasp. Oberta tells Alcina how she misses her father and Alcina promises that they will soon meet again.

Oronte notifies Alcina that her army has now been defeated at the hands of Ruggiero; to himself he expresses contentment that Alcina will finally pay for her wickedness. Alcina, in anguish, longs for oblivion. When Oberta reminds Alcina of her promise to reunite Oberta with her father the Sorceress maliciously brings a lion out of its cage and orders Oberta to kill it with her dagger. Oberta knows it must be her father and, refusing, threatens the queen instead, before escaping.

Scorned at the loss of "Ricciardo's" love, Morgana moves to regain the affections of Oronte. He refuses her despite confessing to still loving her. Ruggiero and Alcina unexpectedly meet, and she demands to know why he is leaving her. When he tells her that he must return to his duty and his betrothed, she contemptuously dismisses him, swearing vengeance.

Because she genuinely loves him, Alcina's powers die along with his love of her. The spirits of the underworld refuse her allegiance. When Ruggiero leaves the island, he destroys Alcina's magical powers. The island is revealed as a wasteland, and Alcina becomes a lonely old woman empty of any magic. Alcina's bewitched lovers are revived, Oberta and her father Astolfo are reunited, and all sing of their liberation and happiness.

Alcina is based on a story in Ariosto's epic poem, *Orlando Furioso* 1591

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Don Wright Faculty of Music fondly remembers the **Late Reverend Edward Jackman**. He was a generous supporter through the Jackman Foundation and regularly attended operas at Western Music. Reverend Jackman was kind and had a true passion for the arts.
He is dearly missed.

We want to thank **Ilona Janoschek** for her ongoing leadership gifts to opera and also thank **The London Opera Guild** for their support of our opera students through scholarships.

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