

PEABODY OPERA THEATRE
in conjunction with the
PEABODY HISTORICAL
PERFORMANCE DEPARTMENT
PRESENTS

Venus AND Adonis

BY JOHN BLOW

Mary Duncan Steidl
Director

Adam Pearl
Music Director

Baltimore Theatre Project

Friday,
February 17
7:30 pm

Saturday,
February 18
2:30 pm and 7:30 pm

Sunday,
February 19
2:30 pm



JOHNS HOPKINS
PEABODY CONSERVATORY

PEABODY OPERA THEATRE
in conjunction with the
PEABODY HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE DEPARTMENT

Mary Duncan Steidl, director and choreographer
Adam Pearl, music director

presents

VENUS AND ADONIS

Composed by John Blow

Stephanie Parks, *costume designer* Ben Young, *production manager*
Lynn Joslin, *lighting designer* Hannah Allison, *stage manager*

Peabody Opera Theatre gratefully recognizes Claire and Allan Jensen for their extraordinary support of opera at Peabody.

Runtime is approximately 55 minutes.
This opera will be performed in English.

CAST

Venus	Katie Hahn *	Alto chorus/Shepherd/ Huntsman/little cupid.	Alix Evans Ruya Ozveren
	Lori Perko ‡		
Cupid	Olivia Heinrich *	Tenor chorus/Shepherd	Matthew Gavilanez Ryan Alexander
	Bryce Zimmerman ‡		
Adonis	TJ Callahan ‡	Bass chorus/Shepherd	Donato Celentano
	Patrick O'Farrell *		
Soprano chorus/ Shepherdess/little cupid	Maura Langella Chris Li Leah Wenger	The Three Graces (dance) Soprano soloists	Grace Herron Ashley Huber Kristen Sullivan

‡ Friday 7:30, Saturday 2:30 cast
* Saturday 7:30, Sunday 2:30 cast

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* is a masque or festive entertainment written and performed for King Charles II and his court in 1683. The libretto has recently been credited to Anne Kingsmill. It is often called the earliest surviving English opera. The masque form employed singing, music, dancing and acting out a story and encouraged courtiers to take on different roles in performance.

In this prologue, Cupid alludes to the infidelity of the court, possibly as a thinly veiled reference to the fact that an actress, Mary (Moll) Davies, who played Venus at the time, was the king's ex-mistress. Cupid was played by their 10-year-old daughter, Lady Mary Tudor.

Henry Purcell's more well-known opera *Dido and Aeneas* was greatly influenced by this work by his teacher. *Venus and Adonis* draws on structures in early French operas by incorporating dances and beautiful choruses.

In the myth, the goddess Venus has fallen in love with a young mortal, Adonis, after being struck accidentally by Cupid's arrow. In John Blow's telling, she encourages Adonis to hunt the wild boar that then gores him. He returns to Venus to die in her arms.

In western lore, and included here, her tears at his death mix with his blood to create the anemone flower.

— Mary Duncan Steidl

PROGRAM ORDER

Three Arias by Henry Purcell

“Shake the cloud from off your brow”

Ashley Huber, soprano

“Pursue thy conquest love”

Kristin Sullivan, soprano

“Oft she visits this loved mountain”

Grace Herron, soprano

PROLOGUE

Cupid, and a group of shepherds, sing of the joys of Love.

ACT I

Venus and Adonis banter and embrace when the sound of a hunt is heard. Venus eventually convinces a reluctant Adonis to join in the boar chase.

ACT II

Venus and Cupid discuss the arts of love and Cupid teaches the little Cupids how to spell in a jab at the infidelity of the court. The Graces enter to perform a suite of dances and the Little Cupids adorn Venus.

ACT III

Venus is distraught and worries for Adonis. He is as returned to her mortally wounded by the boar. She implores the gods to have pity on her as Adonis dies. The chorus joins her in a song of mourning.

ARTISTIC TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Adam Pearl, music director

Early keyboard specialist and director Adam Pearl performs regularly throughout the United States as well as in Europe, South America, and Asia as a soloist, and with many ensembles and orchestras. He is assistant professor of Harpsichord and Historical Performance at the Peabody Conservatory where he teaches harpsichord, coaches ensembles and singers, and teaches classes in continuo improvisation, baroque ornamentation, harpsichord tuning, and harpsichord literature. He directs the Peabody Renaissance Ensemble's singers as well as Peabody's Baroque opera productions. He has recorded on the Chandos, Dorian and Plectra labels, including a solo recording of virtuosic works from the late French Baroque released in 2018. Pearl earned the degrees of BM in piano performance and both MM and DMA in harpsichord performance, all from the Peabody Conservatory. He is a laureate of the 2001 Jurow and 2004 Bruges international harpsichord competitions. From the keyboard, Pearl has directed staged performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, *King Arthur*, and *The Fairy Queen*; Blow's *Venus and Adonis*; Cavalli's *La Calisto*, *La Didone*, and *Eliogabolo*; Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*; Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione*; Charpentier's *David & Jonathas*, and *La Descente d'Orphee aux Enfers*, Reinhard Kaiser's *Pomona*; and Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, *Semele*, *Messiah*, *Jephtha*, *Giulio Cesare*, and *Alcina*.

Mary Duncan Steidl, director and choreographer

Mary Duncan recently directed the premieres of *Time and Chance* by Tony Award winning playwright Mark Medoff, and a new interpretation of *The Soldier's Tale* by Wordsmith with the BSO. She has directed over 50 operas at venues across the country. At the Kennedy Center, with the National Symphony Orchestra, she directed *Der Schauspieldirektor*, *Bastien und Bastienne*, and *La Clemenza di Tito*.

Duncan was associate artistic director of the Berkshire Opera Company for nine seasons where she directed 15 operas. Highlights include the world premiere of Stephen Paulus' *Summer*; *The Rake's Progress*; *Turn of the Screw*; *Susannah*; and *The Consul* released by Newport Classic. Other notable collaborations include the *Rape of Lucretia* with iconic designer Massimo Vignelli at BAM, and *The Magic Flute* with designs by acclaimed illustrator Eric Carle.

During a long association with The Aspen Music Festival, she directed and choreographed numerous operas including *Proving Up* by Missy Mazzoli, the American premiere of Luke Bedford's *Seven Angels*, *Victory Over the Sun*, *Comedy on the Bridge*, *Renard*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Seven Deadly Sins*, and *Trouble in Tahiti*. She is a graduate of The Juilliard School and studied at A.R.T. at Harvard assisting Robert Brustein.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director Mary Duncan Steidl
Music Director, Peabody Opera . . . Laurie Rogers
Costume Designer Stephanie Parks
Lighting Designer Lynn Joslin
Production Manager. Ben Young
Stage Manager Hannah Allison
Set Design M&G Designs

**Assistant Production Manager
for Opera** Gabby Colwell
**Assistant Director and
Stage Manager** Jaqueline Botz
Hair and Makeup Designer McKey Monroe
Costume Assistants Olivia Heaner
Andrianna Ayala
Program Design Amelia Stinnette
Cover Design and Art Ben Johnson

PEABODY HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE

Adam Pearl, music director

Harpichord/Organ
Andrew Bortvin
Sarah Buskirk
Cameron J S Kuzepski

Baroque violin
Carolyn Foulkes
Asa Zimmerman †

Baroque viola
Risa Browder

Baroque cello
Katerina Kotar

Recorder
Sarah Shodja