

SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DANCE
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Acis and Galatea

By: G.F. Handel

May 5-7, and 12-14, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.

May 8 and 15, 2022 at 2 p.m.

Varner Studio Theatre

Oakland University resides on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe, known as the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. The land was ceded in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit and makes up southeast Michigan.

In recognizing the history and respecting the sovereignty of Michigan's Indian Nations, Oakland University honors the heritage of Indigenous communities and their significant role in shaping the course of this region. Further, we recognize the wrongs done to those forcibly removed from their Homelands and commit to fostering an environment of inclusion that is responsive to the needs of First Peoples through our words, policies, and actions.

The preservation and perpetuation of customs and traditions of Indigenous nations are essential to our shared cultural heritage. A deep understanding of Native peoples' past and present informs the teaching, research, and community engagement of the university in its ongoing effort to elevate the dignity of all people and serve as shared stewards of the land.

Acis and Galatea

In Two Acts with One Intermission

By: G.F. Handel

Director
Conductor/Music Director
Rehearsal Pianist
Assistant Conductor
Installation Design

Lighting Designer
Costume Designer
Hair and Makeup Designer
Video Designer

Drake Dantzler
Victoria Shively
Amanda Sabelhaus
Joshua Tobias
Liv Kunkle
Colin Franz
Eileen Brennen
Princess Jones
Emily Nichter
Olivia Kiefer
Kerro Knox 3
Christa Koerner
Liv Kunkle
Joseph Molloy

Acis and Galatea Synopsis

Location: Coridon's Apartment

Date: New Year's Eve

ACT I

At a party at Coridon's, local musicians and students gather to play songs at a New Year's Eve party while Coridon and his friends prepare. Guests arrive and the party begins ("Oh the pleasure of the plains"). Meanwhile, film-student Galatea and her friend head to the party ("You verdant plains"). On the way, her friend teases her about her romantic relationship with fellow college student Acis ("Hush, hush, you pretty warbling choir"). Galatea is making Acis a surprise anniversary gift in the form of a movie to be played at the party.

Acis, impatient to get to the party but unsure of how to get there, questions his friend Damon's knowledge of the route to the party ("Where shall I seek the charming fair?"). On their way to the party, they encounter a friend who helps them. Stopping for rest on the way, Damon tries to get the eager Acis relax and enjoy the moment with the help of some libations ("Stay, shepherd stay...Shepherd what are you pursuing").

Acis arrives and spies Galatea from outside the party ("Lo, here my love"). He reflects on his love for her and her beauty, eventually entering the party to greet Galatea ("Love in her eyes sits playing"). He catches her working on the surprise movie, which she quickly hides. Galatea tells the jealous natured Acis not to worry and to relax ("Oh, did you know the pains of absent love"), and she talks about her love for him ("As when the dove laments his love"). Acis and Galatea sing of their happiness together ("Happy, happy we"), and the party revelers arrive to celebrate the New Year ("Happy, Happy we [reprise]").

Act II

Several hours later, the party has wound down, and revelers are isolated on their electronic devices. After Coridon receives a text from Polly/Paulie Feemus, the party wakes up with a sense of danger ("Wretched lovers"). Feemus, not a planned guest, storms in intoxicated ("I rage"). They take a moment to reflect bitterly on her attractiveness, and later recognize her bag and realize she is at the party ("Oh ruddier than the cherry"). Galatea comes out and confronts Feemus ("Where, fairest, are you running"). A surly Feemus complains to Coridon about his bitter longing for Galatea ("Cease to beauty to be suing"). Coridon, with help from a friend, attempts to cool the rising emotional tide and takes Feemus away ("Would you gain the tender creature").

Acis enters with his friend Damon ("His hideous love"), and plots a confrontation ("Love sounds the alarm"). Damon, too, tries to cool off the heated emotions ("Consider, fond shepherd"). Galatea tells Acis not to worry and to trust her ("Cease, oh cease, you gentle youth"). The pair sings of the constancy of their

love, while a rageful Feemus returns (“The flocks shall leave the mountains/ Torture, fury”). He strikes Acis with an instrument, killing him (“Help, Galatea!”). The shocked party goes to lament Acis’s death (“Mourn all you muses”). Galatea is distraught, and friends try to comfort her (Must I my Acis still bemoan”). Galatea decides to play the video that she had made for Acis (“It’s done”), transforming his memory into a material object (“Heart, the seat of soft delight”). The party goes to comfort Galatea (“Galatea, dry your tears”).

Director’s Note

Acis and Galatea holds a unique place in G.F. Handel’s stage oeuvre as the only work of his to have never left the standard operatic repertoire. Originally the work was a single act, and its premiere occurred not at a theater but instead at the English manor home Cannons. Handel himself adjusted the work several times, creating a three act Italian version as well as the now common two act version. The text is by John Gay of *The Beggar’s Opera* fame, though Handel adjusted many of the text settings himself.

The work attracted other composers’ interest over time, and both W.F. Mozart and Felix Mendelssohn made new orchestral arrangements. Other Handel operas are more commonly performed in modern times, notably *Giulio Cesare*, but *Acis and Galatea* is certainly Handel’s most commonly performed stage work. The work received frequent performances during the 18th and 19th centuries.

As a modern director of collegiate-aged students, Handel’s works present unique challenges. *Acis and Galatea* premiered in 1718. For context, 1718 is the year New Orleans was founded in New France, the year of the first Small Pox inoculation, and the premiere predates the invention of the tuning fork, the lighting rod, and the sextant. Quite understandably, the theatrical and musical conventions of the 1710’s differ wildly from those of the 2020’s. Handel’s music is designed to bathe itself in a singular emotion for lengthy periods of time, pushing the audience member ever further toward emotional understanding. The drama doesn’t have a typically modern plot flow, choosing to rest in the results of actions instead of the actions themselves.

That said, the human experience of 2022 shares much with that of 1718. Love, loss, and jealousy were as much alive then as they are now. In an effort to highlight the commonality of the human experience, we have made several choices to update the setting. Galatea is no longer a nymph, but a college film student. Acis is also a college student, and he is meeting her at a New Year’s Eve party hosted by Coridon, a student and successful Twitch streamer/local musician. The cyclops Polyphemus is translated into a recent graduate and newly hired junior lawyer. He is still hurt from his breakup with Galatea, and Paulie/Polly Feemus arrives to the party with money to burn and a score to settle.

The adjustments continue, including the local nymphs and shepherds as college students, the orchestra as local players jamming at the party, and the reimagining of Acis’s magical transformation not into a river, but instead into a movie. All these changes desire to bring the ancient into the modern and to reduce the metaphysical distance between the performer and the artistic act. We hope they will do the same for you, and that you will be able to delight and relish the glorious art of Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*.

-Drake Dantzler

CAST

Acis

Galatea

Pauly Feemus

Polly Feemus

Damon

Coridon

Revelers

Kellan Dunlap o

Carson Arcuri*

Cassidie Singelyn o

Olivia Donnel *

Kevin Cornwell o

Nina Gojcaj *

Madeleine Krick o

Megan Dastick*

Noah Canales

Cristina Aldo

Amber Ohlsson

Montana King

Aidan Laidlaw

Cayla Stus

Olivia Langsdorf

Maximilian Ulrich

Megan Dastick o

Madeleine Krick*

o Performs on May 5, 7, 12, and 14

**Performs on May 6, 8, 13, and 15*

ORCHESTRA

Violin

Makhi Murray *s*

Viola

Trinity Scarnecchia *s*

Flute

Corrin Kliewer *s**

Claudia Montoya-Hernandez *s**

Clarinet

Benjamin Pruehs *s**

Austin Chasmick *s**

Saxophone

Brant Ford *s**

Tyler Hewett *s**

Euphonium

Christopher Warren *s*

Piano

Amanda Sabelhaus *f*

** co-principal*

s OU student

f OU faculty

PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Director

Assistant Technical Director

Costume Shop Supervisor

Costume Shop Crew

Wardrobe Head

Rehearsal Pianist

Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Manager

Spot Light Operators

Joseph Beck

Randy Magner, Jacquelin Studer

Christa Koerner

Colin Franz, Liv Kunkle,

Eileen Brennan, Philip Christiansen

Colin Franz

Sarmad Ashkuri, Amanda Sabelhaus

Eli Cavaliero

Mason Gaida

Mason Gaida, Jenna Fiorini

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Dedicated in Loving Memory to Maxwell Schein