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Achilles on Skyros

Opera in three acts – Libretto by Pietro Metastasio

Music by Francisco Courcelle

Act 1

1. Overture & Ah! Di tue lodi al suono Chorus
2. No, ingrato! Amor non senti Deidamia
3. Involarmi il mi tesoro Achilles
4. Fra l'ombre un lampo Ulises
5. Alme incaute, che torbide Licomede
6. Si varia in cial talora Arcade
7. Intendo il tuo rossor Licomede
8. Del sen gli adori Deidamia
9. Risponderti vorrei ma Achilles
10. Chi mai vide altrove ancora Teagene

Act 2

11. Quando il scorso apprenda Ulises
12. Fa che si spieghi almeno quell Licomede
13. Potria fra tante pene l'asciar Achilles
14. Così leon feroce che sdegn Nearco
15. Lungi, fuggite, cure ingrate Chorus

Intermission

16. Se un core Achilles & Chorus
17. Dille che si consola Achilles
18. Non vidi tiranno Deidamia
19. Disse il ver? Teagene

Act 3

20. Del terreno nel concavo sento Ulises
21. Ah, perfido! Ah, spergiuo! Deidamia
22. Tornate sereni begli astri d'amore Achilles
23. Numi clementi, se puri Deidamia
24. Chi può dir re son violin & Deidamia
25. Con tromba d'or la fama spieghi Teagene
26. Or che mio figlio sei Licomede
27. Finale. Col vago Chorus

Cast

Achilles.....	Carla López-Speziale
Deidamia, <i>Princess of Skyros</i>	Jocelyn Hansen
Licomedes, <i>King of Skyros</i>	Joshua Hughes
Ulysses, <i>General</i>	Kayla Nanto
Nearco, <i>Achilles' Teacher</i>	Leslie Hochman
Teagene, <i>Prince of Chalcis</i>	Chabely Rendon
Arcade, <i>Confidant of Ulysses</i>	Anna Fredericka Popova
Narrators.....	Nicole Berastequi, Steven Young
Dancers.....	Fernando Hernandez, Jaime Puente, Hailey Von Schlehenried
Chorus.....	Heidi Klein, Katrina Kledas, Sarah Daniels, Brianna Clancey, Alex Bumpas, Tim Johnson, William Derusha, Charlie Moore

Orchestra

<i>violin 1</i>	<i>cello</i>	<i>horn</i>
James Andrewes	Eric Smith	Nancy Jarrett
Thane Isaac		Stuart Womble
Jeffrey Smith	<i>flutes</i>	
	Janelle West	<i>contrabass</i>
<i>violin 2</i>	Lee Lattimore	Andrew Williams
Rhea Edelman		
Yuko Tatsumi	<i>oboe</i>	<i>timpani</i>
	Matthew Hudgens	Jacob Adam Garcia
<i>viola</i>	Maryanna Bryant	
Miguel Cantu		<i>harpsichord</i>
		Brad Bennight

Production

Jaime Puente	Selena Anguiano	Alexandra Hernandez
<i>Assistant Director/ Choreographer</i>	<i>Associate Producer</i>	<i>Stage Manager</i>
Will Elphinstone	Antonio Bartolo	Ian Richter
<i>Light Designer</i>	Hernandez	<i>Assistant Stage Manager/ Prop Construction</i>
	<i>Costume Designer</i>	
Brad Cawyer		<i>Dallas Costume Shoppe</i>
<i>Supertitles</i>		<i>Costume Construction</i>

Chabely Rendon, Teagene – Chabely Rendon is a graduate of North Texas and attains a BM in Voice performance. Born and raised in Dallas, Tx, Chabely, was a graduate of Booker T. Washington HSPVA, a recipient of the Texas Association of Music Schools Clara Freshour Nelson Music Scholarship, and a member of A Capella choir at the University of North Texas. She made her first opera debut in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and collaborated with the early music ensemble. Chabely was a finalist for the Mid-Texas Symphony Young Artist Competition and semi-finalist of the UNT Concerto Competition. She was featured as an A Capella soloist in the UNT symphony and Grand chorus Turandot performance. Chabely Rendon will be performing the role of Teagene in *Achille in Sciro* on February 8, 9, and 10th with the Orchestra of New Spain. Mrs. Rendon has her studio located in flower mound where she instructs voice privately to young students and adults.

Gustavo Tambascio, Stage Director – Mr. Tambascio developed his early artistic career in Venezuela where he was Director of the multicomplex Ateneo de Caracas until 1988. He subsequently built a prolific career directing theatre, opera and musicals in Europe, the United States and South America. Based in Madrid, he works in major theatres and festivals of the country (Teatro Real, Liceo de Barcelona, Teatro de la Zarzuela, Centro Dramatico Nacional, Teatro Maestranza, festivals of Almagro, Merida and Madrid). In 2007, he took on Coordination of the National Center for Historic Music and Performing Arts in Leon, where he co-produced with San Carlo Opera, Naples, the forgotten masterpiece by Leonardo Vinci, *La Partenope*, unanimously acclaimed by European critics and awarded critic's prize for best opera presented in Spain in 2009.

Hailey Von Schlehenried, Dancer – Hailey is originally from Johannesburg, South Africa, and has been dancing and studying dance for more than 20 years. She is a registered teacher with the RAD, a graduate from the Certificate in Ballet Teaching Studies (CBTS). Hailey is proficient in all forms of dance including: ballet, lyrical, contemporary, jazz, modern, and Flamenco. Currently, Hailey is the resident choreographer at Royale Ballet Dance Academy in Dallas. In addition to choreographing, Hailey also dances Flamenco professionally with Daniel de Córdoba Bailes Espanoles and guests with the company. Hailey is honored to be performing again with Orchestra of New Spain.

Steven Young, Narrator – Steven is pleased to be working again with the Orchestra of New Spain having performed with the company in *Cervantes and Shakespeare: A Spring Celebration*. Next week he shifts hats and will be directing *The Tempest* produced by The Stolen Shakespeare Guild. In August, Steven's new comedy he wrote *A Proper Man* will be produced by Pegasus Theatre. This summer, Mr. Young can be seen performing at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival as Falstaff in *Merry Wives*, Nym in *Henry V* and Richard Burbage in *Shakespeare in Love*.

Grover Wilkins, Music Director – Mr. Wilkins is a specialist in music of the Spanish 18th century and Music Director of the Spanish orchestra Madrid Barroco, as well as the Orchestra of New Spain. In addition to his conducting duties, Mr. Wilkins has done major primary source research in numerous Spanish court and cathedral archives reviving dozens of unknown works representing the best composers of the Spanish 18th century. His critical editions are the basis for the concerts of both these orchestras. He has recorded selections of this repertory with Madrid Barroco and with the Orquesta y Coro de Radiotelevisión Española, and in Dallas for the Dorian/Sonoluminus label. With two Fulbright Senior Research Fellowships to his credit, Mr. Wilkins and the Orchestra of New Spain presented a concert in Washington, D.C. the 50th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Spain.

ACHILLES ON SKYROS

Carla López-Speziale, Achilles – Recognized for her “beautiful, warm voice with a secure and soft top and a powerful low register”, Carla López-Speziale has enjoyed a long and distinguished mezzo-soprano career in opera, zarzuela and as a concert artist. Some of her most notable roles are Carmen—a role she has performed in the United States, Mexico and China—, Dalila (*Samson et Dalila*), La zia principessa (*Suor Angelica*), Isabella (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Mitrena (Vivaldi's *Montezuma*), Orfeo (*Orfeo ed Euridice*), Cupido (*Las nuevas armas de amor*), the Old Lady (*Candide*), and Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*) among others. She is a winner of competitions such as the Vincenzo Bellini in Italy, the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in New York and the “Carlo Morelli” competition in Mexico, among others and has collaborated with ONS over many years. Ms. López-Speziale holds a Bachelor of Music Degree from the National Conservatory in Mexico and as a Fulbright fellow, received Master and Doctor in Musical Arts Degrees from the Manhattan School of Music.

Kayla Nanto, Ulisse – Mezzo-soprano Kayla Nanto is currently a graduate student at University of North Texas. Recent roles include Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (The Fillmore Studio), Petra in *A Little Night Music* (UNT Opera), Flora in *La traviata* (UNT Opera), and Edith in *Pirates of Penzance* (Loveland Opera Theatre). Kayla recently completed her Bachelor of Music at the University of Northern Colorado, where she performed the title role in *Carmen* and Angelina in an abridged version of *La Cenerentola*.

Anna Fredericka Popova, Arcade – Anna Fredericka Popova is a leading soloist with the Dallas Bach Society, St. Thomas Church New York, the Orchestra of New Spain, the Arts District Chorale and many more. Ms. Popova, a “most communicative performer” with an “enamel finished and generously expressive” soprano, has appeared on concert stages around the world, most notably with the Cervantino International Baroque Music Festival, the International Renaissance and Baroque Music Festival and the Siglo de Oro International Drama Festival. Previous credits include the role of “Jupiter” in the New World Premier of Duron's zarzuela 'Las Nuevas Armas de Amor' and “Maddalena” in Handel's 'La Resurrezzione', “Iphigenia” in Nebra's 'Iphigenia en Tracia' with Director Gustavo Tambascio and as a Principal Artist with the American Baroque Opera Company, she will portray “Alcina” in Handel's masterpiece 'Alcina' in March 2018.

Jaime Puente, Choreographer & Dancer – Mr. Puente studied Spanish Dance in the Royal Professional Conservatory of dance of Madrid. He performs with numerous companies of Spanish dance and flamenco, including: Ibérica de Danza, Ballet Folclórico de Madrid. He studied Italian Renaissance and French and Spanish Baroque dance and belongs to the following companies: “Esquivel”, “La Española”, “Ordo”, Xuriach”. He has collaborated with other European companies. Under the direction of Gustavo Tambascio he participated in *El Burgués gentilhomme*, in *zarzuelas* and in the baroque opera *La Partenope*. He has developed choreographic works for companies like Ballet Español. This is Mr. Puente's fourth appearance with the Orchestra, in which he also acts as Assistant Stage Director and Choreographer.

According to the Homeric poem, Achilles was the greatest warrior of the Trojan war, notorious for his bad temper. His father was Peleus, king of the Myrmidons, his mother Thetis, an immortal nymph, and his teacher Chiron the centaur. Achilles killed the Trojan hero Hector, and Paris killed Achilles by shooting him in his heel, his only vulnerable part.

The plot of this opera is based on post-Homeric tales, updated by the enormously famous Italian dramatist Metastasio, in elegant eighteenth-century verse and high rhetoric. We now find the long florid speeches unrealistic and stilted. We are unlikely to identify with the aristocratic and royal characters, who if male are destined for war, or if female, for unwanted, loveless marriages. Since, however, there are hundreds and hundreds of these operas from the 17th to the early 19th centuries, we are forced to conclude that they fully satisfied the expectations of their sophisticated audiences, who considered the poetry of the libretti the highest form of literature and the ancient characters as models of morality, patriotism, and self-sacrifice.

On top of these apparent obstacles to our enjoyment is the delivery, not by speech but by song and recitative. Clearly, the whole purpose of telling a tale in sung, artificially rhythmical language, is to raise it to the highest level of abstraction from normal experience, to an ideal world of eternal ideas and beauty. We must therefore renounce our twenty-first-century expectations of realistic behavior and surrender to the flow of the music and subconscious effects of the great myths.

There may yet be some way to connect the persons in this particular opera to something in our culture, like *West Side Story*, and to our apparently insatiable craving for love-at-first-sight soaps. Achilles is a rash athletic prodigy from an important family. Deidamia is a spoiled rich girl, always carefully chaperoned and just reaching the age for an arranged marriage. Think of Achilles as young enough to pass, with the proper disguise, as a tall, slightly boyish girl. This provides the only way that he can stay near Deidamia. There have been so many comic transvestite movies and TV shows that this should not be too much of a stretch. The characters who stand in their way are stereotypes. First, there is the stolid father who thinks that the girlish crush between his daughter and her friend is funny. Then comes the puzzled bridegroom who has no personal interest in marrying Deidamia and is turned on by the brush-off from the sexy Pyrrha (Achilles in drag). The worst threat to the love birds is Ulysses, famous for his devious brilliance and ruthlessness, who is going to expose the lovers' scheme in order to further his own military ambitions. So how will the gods solve this dilemma? Achilles is duty-bound to join the army sent to attack Troy, Deidamia is duty-bound to accept her father's choice of husband, and we, the audience, already know that the Trojan War is going to end badly. We must now wait see how Metastasio surprises us with his star-crossed pair and how Courcelle engages our emotions with his ravishing music.

One other feature of this production which eighteenth-century Spaniards would have taken for granted and would have found doubly entertaining is the mostly female cast, and the blurred gender-roles. Thus Achilles (sung by a female singer portraying a young man who is pretending to be a girl) attracts the suitor Theagenes, sung by a male singer who believes that Pyrrha (a female singer playing a man playing a girl), is a woman, which she is.

The opera (performed in the theater of disappeared palace of Buen Retiro in early 1745) was the centerpiece of celebration in honor of the marriage of Princess María Teresa Rafaela to the Dauphin of France. In the audience were the king, Felipe V de Borbón, born at Versailles, grandson of Louis XIV, and his second wife, Isabel de Farnesio.

The librettist is the great Italian poet Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782). His real name was Pietro Trapassi, and he was a Roman child prodigy, who in his early 30s was so famous for his poetry and dramas that he moved to Vienna, where for 40 years he composed plots for operas that the best composers set for the greatest singers of the day. During his lifetime, there were 40 editions of his works, which were translated into all important European languages.

Joseph R. Jones PhD

Synopsis

The story that serves as the base for the libretto goes back to one of the favorite periods of the baroque and neoclassical eras: Ancient Greece, in particular the Trojan War, as narrated by the great Homer in both his books the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Tetis, mother of Achilles, the super hero of the Trojan War, learned from the oracle that her son's life was in serious danger if he joined the punitive expedition against Troy. To keep him from such a fate she dressed him as a girl, and sent him to live in the court of Licomede, King of the Island kingdom of Skyros. As the opera proceeds, the fiery manly character of Achilles and his female attire create moments of conflict.

Achilles falls for Deidamia, daughter of Licomede, but is obliged to keep hidden his masculine identity, known only to his tutor Nearco and the princess. On a day when warships are seen in the harbor Nearco realizes that the cunning Ulysses has arrived, very likely sent by the commanding general of the Greek army, Agamemnon, in search of the hero, whom the gods have endowed with the courage and skills to perform the most heroic deeds in the Trojan War.

The full development of the opera has to do with Ulysses' certitude of Achilles' identity, his plans, set ups and tricks to have him reveal his real nature, and the excitement brought about by the cunning hero with his comments and narrations of the heroic tasks they are about to perform in Troy.

The parallel intrigues follow the conventions of opera seria and the famous baroque triangle: A loves B, but B loves C, and all its variations. Hence, Teagene, betrothed to Deidamia, who is loved in secret by Achilles and shares his hidden identity, falls for Achilles in his feminine identity, captivated by the fiery and energetic character of the bizarre lady.

Gustavo Tambascio

Biography

Antonio Bartolo, Costume Designer – Costume designer Antonio Bartolo received his Bachelor in Fine Arts, Master in Design and PhD at the Complutense University of Madrid, (specialized in Performing Arts, set and costume design). His 2013 research focuses on Spanish and European baroque Performing Arts and costume design. He has also studied at the Teatro Real of Madrid, Prado Museum of Madrid and the National Center for the Performing Arts and Historical Music. In February 2012, he participated in the development and assembly of *Clemenza de Tito*, directed by Ursel Karl-Ernst Hermann at the Teatro Real of Madrid. He also worked as set designer and costume designer of *Viva Verdi*, directed by Gustavo Tambascio at the Teatro Fernando Fernan Gomez of Madrid in September 2012 and the ONS productions of *Nuevas armas de amor* in 2013 and *Villa y Corte* in 2015 also under the direction of Gustavo Tambascio.

Nicole Berastequi, Narrator – At Shakespeare Dallas Ms. Berastequi has performed in *King Lear* (Regan), *Romeo & Juliet* (Lady Capulet), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Helena), *Twelfth Night* (Maria), *As You Like It* (Phoebe), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Silvia). Ms. Berastequi has also performed with Orchestra of New Spain in *Las nuevas armas de amor* (Astrea); in City Attic Theater (Off-Off Broadway) in *On the Verge* (Fanny); and *B. A. D. A.* (Oxford, England): *4.48 Psychosis* (Woman) Regional: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Reading Series: *The Comedy of Errors* (Adriana). Ms. Berastequi received her B.F.A. in Acting at Southern Methodist University, and a B.F.A. in Acting at the British American Drama Academy (Oxford, England) where she studied with Fiona Shaw and Sir Derek Jacobi.

Jocelyn Hansen, Deidamia – Hailed as "totally charming and captivating" (Cape Cod Times), Jocelyn is an emerging young soprano who is at home both in the realms of opera and musical theatre. In the summer of 2017 Ms. Hansen was an Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera, where she covered the role of Mrs. Nordstrom (A Little Night Music). Jocelyn debuted the roles of Pamina (The Magic Flute), and Morgana (Alcina) with UNT Opera. Some other roles performed recently include Sister Constance (The Dialogues of the Carmelites), and Poppea (L'incoronazione di Poppea). Her regional credits include Elsie Maynard (Yeomen of the Guard) and Babette (Beauty and the Beast) with College Light Opera Company, and Liesl VonTrapp (The Sound of Music) with Arbor Opera Theater. Other previous roles include Anne Egerman (A Little Night Music), Adele (Die Fledermaus), Diana Deveraux (Of Thee I Sing), Sgt. Sarah Brown (Guys and Dolls), and Johanna (Sweeney Todd).

Fernando Hernandez, Dancer – Fernando Hernandez's professional dance career encompasses a myriad of performing and teaching residencies in Mexican Folklórico Dance. For over ten years he was a soloist with the professional Folklórico Dance Company in Monterrey. His performing residencies have taken him to Canada, Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, United States, and his native Mexico. He has worked with college groups as well as with professional companies setting traditional Folklórico dances. He has been a professional member of the Institute for the Investigation and Diffusion of Mexican Dance Civil Association. Mr. Hernandez has also served as a teaching assistant at the Monterrey Technology Institute. He is currently a member of the adjunct faculty at BTWHSPVA and is the resident choreographer for BTWHSPVA's World Dance Ensemble.

Leslie Hochman, Nearco – Leslie Hochman last appeared with ONS as Dircea in our production of Jose de Nebra's Iphigenia en Tracia. She has been praised for her "lyrically beautiful, vocally expressive, and robust" singing by the Binghamton Press and Sun. She has performed with Tri-Cities Opera, Toledo Opera, the Caramoor Bel Canto Festival, Regina Opera, and Connecticut Grand Opera. Roles include Hanna in The Merry Widow, Mimi in La Bohème, Pamina in Die Zauberflöte, Violetta in La Traviata, Belinda in Dido and Aeneas, Mrs. Gobineau in The Medium, and Suor Genovieffa in Suor Angelica. In 2009 she appeared with the American Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leon Botstein, where she made her Avery Fisher Hall debut as a soloist. Upcoming performances include Oberto in Handel's Alcina with American Baroque Opera Company and her Meyerson solo debut with the Dallas Bach Society in J.S Bach's St. Matthew's Passion.

Joshua Hughes, Licomede – Lauded as "a lush, rich baritone" (TheatreBloom) with "a brilliant vocal range," (DC Metro Theater Arts) Joshua Hughes has performed in opera, operetta, and theatre ranging from Gilbert and Sullivan to Mozart to Shakespeare. Locally, Hughes has performed in Charpentier's Les Arts Florissants with Dallas Bach Society, Mame (Junior Babcock) with Lyric Stage, and The Winter's Tale (Antigonous and Florizel) with Barebones Shakespeare Company. Hughes has also performed with Young Victorian Theatre Company in their productions of HMS Pinafore (Sir Joseph Porter) and Iolanthe (Lord Chancellor), Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Ambrogio) with Lyric Opera Baltimore, Ruddigore (Robin) with Victorian Lyric Opera Company, and Così fan tutte (Guglielmo) with Bethesda Summer Music Festival. Hughes has a Master of Music in Voice Performance and Pedagogy from the Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University and received his Bachelor of Music Education from Oklahoma City University. www.joshuahughesbaritone.com.