

Handel

SEMELLE

Monteverdi Choir

English Baroque Soloists

John Eliot Gardiner



George Frideric Handel
1685-1759

Semele

Semele	Louise Alder
Jupiter	Hugo Hymas
Juno / Ino	Lucile Richardot
Athamas	Carlo Vistoli
Cadmus / Somnus	Gianluca Buratto
Iris	Emily Owen
Cupid	Angela Hicks
Apollo	Peter Davoren
Augur	Angharad Rowlands
High Priest	Dan D'Souza

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This recording was taken from a staged concert performance at London's Alexandra Palace Theatre on 2 May 2019, in front of a live audience.

	CD1	39:07	Act I
	1	4:56	Overture
	2	1:44	Gavotte
Act I, Scene 1	3	1:32	Accompagnato: 'Behold! Auspicious flashes rise' (High Priest)
	4	3:14	Chorus: 'Lucky omens bless our rites'
	5	1:01	Recit., arioso and duet: 'Daughter, obey' (Cadmus, Athamas)
	6	1:01	Recit.: 'Ah me!' (Semele)
	7	1:57	Air: 'O Jove! In pity teach me which to choose' (Semele)
	8	0:44	Recit.: 'Alas! she yields' (Ino, Athamas)
	9	2:59	Quartet: 'Why dost thou thus untimely grieve' (Cadmus, Ino, Athamas, Semele)
	10	2:02	Chorus: 'Avert these omens, all ye pow'rs'
	11	1:00	Recit.: 'Again auspicious flashes rise' (Athamas) – Recit.: 'Thy aid, pronubial Juno, Athamas implores!' (Athamas, Semele)
	12	0:33	Chorus: 'Cease, cease your vows, 'tis impious to proceed'
Scene 2	13	0:44	Recit.: 'Turn, hopeless lover, turn thy eyes (Ino) – Recit.: 'She weeps!' (Athamas)
	14	4:41	Air: 'Your tuneful voice my tale would tell' (Athamas)
	15	0:47	Recit.: 'Too well I see' (Ino, Athamas)
	16	2:37	Duet: 'You've undone me' (Ino, Athamas)
Scene 3	17	0:34	Recit.: 'Ah! wretched prince, doom'd to disastrous love!' (Cadmus, Athamas) – Accompagnato: 'Wing'd with our fears and pious hate' (Cadmus)
	18	1:23	Chorus: 'Hail Cadmus, hail!'
Scene 4	19	5:35	Air and chorus: 'Endless pleasure, endless love' (Augur, Chorus)

CD2 50:55 Act II

	1	1:31	Sinfonia
Act II, Scene 1	2	0:47	Recit.: 'Iris, impatient of thy stay' (Juno, Iris)
	3	2:54	Air: 'There, from mortal cares retiring' (Iris) – Recit.: 'No more, I'll hear no more' (Juno)
	4	1:49	Accompagnato: 'Awake, Saturnia, from thy lethargy!' (Juno) – Recit.: 'Hear, mighty queen, while I recount' (Iris) – Accompagnato: 'With adamant the gates are barr'd' (Iris)
	5	3:34	Air: 'Hence, Iris, hence away' (Juno)
Scene 2	6	5:40	Air: 'Come, zephyrs, come, while Cupid sings' (Cupid)
	7	3:22	Air: 'O sleep, why dost thou leave me' (Semele)
Scene 3	8	0:18	Recit.: 'Let me not another moment' (Semele)
	9	3:09	Air: 'Lay your doubts and fears aside' (Jupiter)
	10	0:25	Recit.: 'You are mortal and require' (Jupiter)
	11	2:56	Air: 'With fond desiring' (Semele)
	12	2:49	Chorus: 'How engaging, how endearing'
	13	1:09	Recit.: 'Ah, me!' – 'Why sighs my Semele?' (Semele, Jupiter)
	14	3:48	Air: 'I must with speed amuse her' (Jupiter)
	15	2:19	Chorus: 'Now Love that everlasting boy invites'
	16	1:15	Recit.: 'By my command' (Jupiter, Semele)
	17	5:25	Air: 'Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade' (Jupiter)
Scene 4	18	0:53	Recit.: 'Dear sister, how was your passage hither?' (Semele, Ino)
	19	1:53	Air: 'But hark! the heav'nly sphere turns round' (Ino)
	20	2:09	Duet: 'Prepare then, ye immortal choir' (Semele, Ino)
	21	2:47	Chorus: 'Bless the glad earth with heav'nly lays'

CD3 65:47 Act III

	1	1:38	Sinfonia
Act III, Scene 1	2	0:30	Accompagnato: 'Somnus, awake' (Juno, Iris)
	3	3:39	Air: 'Leave me, loathsome light' (Somnus)
	4	0:34	Recit.: 'Dull God, canst thou attend the water's fall' (Iris, Juno)
	5	2:28	Air: 'More sweet is that name' (Somnus)
	6	1:21	Recit.: 'My will obey' (Juno, Somnus)
	7	2:04	Duet: 'Obey my will, thy rod resign' (Juno, Somnus)
	Scene 2	8	3:11
Scene 3	9	1:33	Recit.: 'Thus shap'd like Ino' (Juno, Semele)
	10	6:39	Air: 'Myself I shall adore' (Semele)
	11	1:43	Recit.: 'Be wise as you are beautiful' (Juno, Semele) – Accompagnato: 'Conjure him by his oath' (Juno)
	12	2:46	Air: 'Thus let my thanks be paid' (Semele)
	13	0:25	Recit.: 'Rich odours fill the fragrant air' (Juno, Semele)
Scene 4	14	3:33	Air: 'Come to my arms, my lovely fair' (Jupiter)
	15	1:41	Recit.: 'O Semele!' (Jupiter) – Air: 'I ever am granting' (Semele)
	16	1:09	Recit.: 'Speak, speak your desire' (Jupiter, Semele) – Accompagnato: 'By that tremendous flood, I swear' (Jupiter) – Recit.: 'You'll grant what I require?' (Semele, Jupiter) – Accompagnato: 'Then cast off this human shape which you wear' (Semele)
	17	1:04	Air: 'Ah, take heed what you press' (Jupiter)
	18	4:45	Air: 'No, no, I'll take no less' (Semele)
Scene 5	19	3:22	Accompagnato: 'Ah, whither is she gone, unhappy fair?' (Jupiter)
Scene 6	20	2:10	Air: 'Above measure' (Juno)
Scene 7	21	3:26	Accompagnato: 'Ah me! Too late I now repent' (Semele)
Scene 8	22	4:17	Chorus: 'O terror and astonishment!'
	23	0:46	Recit.: 'How I was hence remov'd' (Ino, Cadmus, Athamas)
	24	4:59	Air: 'Despair no more shall wound me' (Athamas)
	25	0:18	Recit.: 'See from above the bellying clouds descend' (Cadmus)
Scene 9	26	1:44	Sinfonia
	27	0:53	Accompagnato: 'Apollo comes, to relieve your care' (Apollo)
	28	3:07	Chorus: 'Happy, happy shall we be'



“No oratorio, but a bawdy Opera”

Charles Jennens,
librettist of *Messiah*

It is ironic – and surely not coincidental – that the first great full-length opera in the English language was composed in 1743 by Handel, an émigré German approaching the height of his powers, but in self-imposed retirement from the toxic London opera scene. *Semele* was his defiant counter-blast to those who for years had sought to control him – the rival aristocratic theatre-owners and company directors. Not surprisingly, Handel preferred to promote and organise his own annual concert season at Covent Garden free from interference, and with his own hand-picked soloists, orchestra and chorus. *Semele* caught his audience off balance: it was not a conventional Italian opera properly ‘staged’ (though it clearly was in Handel’s imagination and despite the presence of elaborate stage directions); nor was it a pious oratorio based on the Old Testament tailored to the Lenten season. Far from it. Instead he chose a ‘profane’ story based on Ovid, in which gods and mortals operate on the same level, behaving badly and passionately but in ways that everyone – except the disgruntled audience of the time or, later, the sanctimonious Victorians – can relate to. Handel was breaking fresh ground with *Semele*: it was a new form of music drama, drawing the best features of Italian opera and creating a synthesis of the English masque and ‘semi-opera’ traditions (which he had first attempted in the delicious *Acis and Galatea* 25 years earlier). *Semele*’s musical score is a glorious blend of irresistible solo arias – some virtuosic showstoppers, others lyrical, sensual and evocative, ensembles, duets,



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accompanied recitatives and (unlike his operas) imposing choruses. Still more than when I first performed it and recorded it almost forty years ago, I feel *Semele*'s time has finally come.

John Eliot Gardiner

Synopsis

Act I

Cadmus, King of Thebes, and his family have travelled to the Temple of Juno in Bœotia to solemnise the marriage of his daughter Semele to Prince Athamas. The Priests and Augurs proclaim that the omens for the marriage seem propitious, but Semele has been inventing one excuse after another to delay the wedding because she is secretly in love with Jupiter. Semele pleads to Jupiter for help, and his thunder interrupts the ceremony and extinguishes the sacrificial flames on the altar of his wife Juno. The Priests advise everyone to flee from the temple, but the despairing Athamas and Semele's sister Ino remain behind.

Ino reveals to the astonished Athamas that she loves him. Cadmus interrupts with the shocking news that Semele, surrounded by azure flames, has been abducted by a giant eagle, 'on purple wings descending', that left behind a scent of 'celestial odour and ambrosial dew'. The Priests and Augurs identify that this eagle was Jupiter, and Semele is heard to announce that 'Endless pleasure, endless love, Semele enjoys above.'

Act II

Juno, angered at her husband's adultery, has ordered her messenger Iris to discover where Jupiter and Semele are. Iris reports that Jupiter has built his new mortal lover an elaborate new palace on Mount Cithaeron, and warns that it is guarded by fierce dragons that never sleep. The enraged Juno swears vengeance, and hastens to visit

Somnus, the God of Sleep, in order to enlist his aid.

Semele, attended by Loves and Zephyrs, yearns for Jupiter. He arrives, in human form, reassures her of his fidelity, and reminds her that she is only mortal and needs time to rest between their bouts of love-making. Semele professes devotion to him, but reveals her discontent that she has not been made immortal. Jupiter, recognizing that Semele has dangerous ambition, transforms the palace to Arcadia, charms her with its pastoral delights, and magically summons her sister Ino to keep her company. The enraptured Ino describes the heavenly music she has heard on the way to Mount Cithaeron whilst carried by two winged Zephyrs. The sisters, and a chorus of nymphs and swains, sing of the joys of music.

Act III

The cavernous dwelling of Somnus, god of sleep, is rudely disturbed by the arrival of Juno and Iris. Somnus lethargically refuses to help Juno, but he is enlivened when Juno promises him the reward of his favourite nymph Pasithea. Juno orders Somnus to give Jupiter an erotic dream that will make him desperate to enjoy Semele's favours at any price. Juno takes Somnus' magical lead rod in order to beguile the dragons and Ino to sleep. Juno assumes the form of Ino, pretends to believe that Semele has been made immortal, and gives her a magical mirror that deceives the foolish girl into thinking herself even more beautiful than usual. Juno advises that if Semele wishes to become truly immortal then she must refuse sexual favours

to Jupiter until he promises to grant any wish she desires, and that she must request that he come to her in his true undisguised form ('like himself, the Mighty Thunderer'). Semele eagerly accepts this advice. Juno departs when she senses the approach of Jupiter.

Inflamed by desire for Semele, Jupiter is astonished when she acts coldly towards him. He rashly swears an irrevocable vow to grant her whatever she desires, and she demands that he visit her in his natural guise. He reacts with horror, knowing that his lightning bolts will certainly kill her, but she refuses to listen to reason, assuming that Jupiter does not wish to grant her immortality. Left alone, Jupiter tries to find a way to save Semele's life, but dejectedly realizes that 'she must a victim fall'. Juno gloats in triumph at her victory. Semele sees Jupiter descend as a fiery cloud of lightning and thunder, laments her folly, and dies consumed in flames. Ino, safely returned to Bœotia, announces the tragic news that Semele has perished. However, some good has come of it: Jupiter has ordained that Ino and Athamas must be wed, and Apollo prophesies that Bacchus, god of wine and unborn child of Semele and Jupiter, will arise from Semele's ashes to bring a delight 'more mighty than love' to the earth.

David Vickers

Handel and *The Story of Semele*

Handel ceased composing and performing Italian operas in London after 1741 and resolved to confine his main musical output to unstaged English theatre works. During summer 1743 the Earl of Middlesex attempted to entice the fifty-eight-year-old composer to return from his self-imposed operatic retirement with an offer of £1,000 to write two new operas. Handel initially accepted, but then changed his mind – even stubbornly refusing the personal entreaties of the Prince of Wales – and instead organized his own Lenten series of twelve subscription concerts at Covent Garden.

At around the same time as rejecting the repeated offers from Lord Middlesex's opera company, Handel composed the overtly operatic concert entertainment *Semele*, set to an old English opera libretto by the playwright William Congreve (1670–1729) – an extraordinary decision that must have aggravated the Italian opera lobbyists amongst the nobility. He commenced writing the music on 3 June 1743, finished Act I on 13 June, Act II on 20 June, and finished the filled-out score of the entire work on 4 July; it took only a month and one day to complete.

Congreve had been Sir John Vanbrugh's partner in the planning, building and artistic direction of the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket (renamed the King's Theatre after the succession of George I). This was the theatre for which Handel composed most of his Italian operas, but when it was first planned it had been hoped that the venue would nurture the development of all-sung English opera. With that aim in mind, Congreve based his *Semele*,

An Opera on a fable in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and summarized its action:

After Jupiter's Amour with Europa, the Daughter of Agenor, King of Phoenicia, he again incenses Juno by a new Affair in the same Family; viz. with Semele, Niece to Europa, and Daughter to Cadmus King of Thebes. Semele is on the Point of Marriage with Athamas; which Marriage is about to be solemniz'd in the Temple of Juno, Goddess of Marriages, when Jupiter by ill Omens interrupts the Ceremony; and afterwards transports Semele to a private Abode prepar'd for her. Juno, after many Contrivances, at length assumes the Shape and Voice of Ino, Sister to Semele; by the help of which Disguise, and artful Insinuations, she prevails with her to make a Request to Jupiter, which being granted must end in her utter Ruin.

The libretto was first set to music by John Eccles (c.1668–1735), the leading London theatre music composer after the death of Henry Purcell. This fantastic extravaganza was probably intended to celebrate the opening of the new Queen's Theatre, which was designed to have good acoustics and enable elaborate scenic transformations. In the event, Eccles did not finish the music in time. By the time it was ready to be rehearsed in January 1707, the disillusioned Congreve had quit the Queen's Theatre project, the actress-singer Anne Bracegirdle (for whom the title-role was designed) was about to retire, and only spoken plays were permitted at the theatre after the Lord

Chamberlain granted the rival Drury Lane theatre a temporary monopoly on opera. The Drury Lane manager Christopher Rich agreed with Eccles to produce *Semele*, but the abject failure of Addison's *Rosamund* in March 1707 discouraged Rich from risking another all-sung English opera, and so *Semele* was permanently abandoned. Fed up by the shenanigans of theatre politics, Eccles left London and reputedly spent most of his time fishing. Congreve was also deeply disappointed by the failure of *Semele* to get to the stage, but his libretto was printed in *The Second Volume of the Works of Mr. William Congreve* (1710), for which the author added a Latin epigram from Seneca's *Epistles*, complaining about the fickleness of public taste: 'We forsake nature and commit ourselves to the public, a bad guide in anything, and in this, as in everything, most inconsistent'.

The old-fashioned text was too short to meet the expectations of Handel's audience, so it required some adaptation, and particularly the addition of more choruses and *da capo* arias. The anonymous adaptation of the libretto for Handel drew extra texts judiciously from Congreve's other poems: Semele's 'My racking thoughts' was taken from the elegy *To Sleep*; Ino's recitative 'O'er many states' from Congreve's translation of the Homeric *Hymn to Venus*; most of the chorus 'Oh terror and astonishment' from *Of Pleasing: an epistle to Sir Richard Temple*; Ino's 'But hark! the heavenly sphere turns round' from the ode *On Mrs Arabella Hunt, singing*. Three new texts were not taken from Congreve's works: Jupiter's 'Where'er you walk' was adapted from Alexander Pope's pastoral

Summer, and it seems that Athamas's 'Despair no more shall wound me' and the final chorus 'Happy, happy shall we be' were newly written.

The music proves that Handel's instincts as a dramatist were razor-sharp, and he undoubtedly relished the libretto's ingredients of supernatural events, affectionate humour, extrovert wit, erotic tenderness, unfulfilled longing, murderous jealousy, coquettish vanity, tragic vulnerability, euphoria and loss. He took great care over the composition of his music, which illustrates the emotional or psychological condition of characters using the orchestral scoring of strings and continuo in a panoply of different ways; oboes and bassoons are used very sparingly, and brass only feature in two choruses. There are more accompanied recitatives than in any of his other theatre works: Iris's fantastic report of the dragons that guard Semele's palace, and the twinkling of their 'thousand fiery eyes which never know repose', is wittily illustrated; Juno's explosive vengefulness is immediately apparent in her 'No more – I'll hear no more'; the drowsy slow music depicting Somnus's sleepy cave, featuring memorable use of bassoons, is rudely disturbed by flurrying strings that herald Juno's agitated arrival and summons 'Somnus awake!' – and yet the God of Sleep proves impossible to rouse from his slumbers ('Leave me, loathsome light') until the mention of the lovely nymph Pasithea rouses him from his lethargy. Jupiter's 'Ah! whither is she gone' shows his eventual resignation that he cannot save the mortal woman he loves (the recurring section "'Tis past, 'tis past recall, She must a victim fall!' reveals

a hitherto unsuspected sincerity and poignant depth in the philandering God). Semele's demise in 'Ah me! too late I now repent' is a tragic doom for the flirtatious, vain and ambitious mortal whose folly hits its peak when she becomes entranced by her own loveliness when gazing into an enchanted mirror ('Myself I shall adore').

The first performance of *Semele* was at the Theatre-Royal in Covent Garden on 10 February 1744. On that day, the *London Daily Post* advertised that for one shilling the public could acquire the wordbook of 'The Story of Semele; Alter'd from the Semele by Mr. Congreve', and the newspaper also announced that it would be performed 'after the manner of an oratorio'. Handel was careful not to publicly call it a concert opera or a secular English music drama because such entertainments were forbidden during Lent, but he was sensible that he could not describe it as an actual oratorio. His cast included the trilingual Elisabeth Duparc ('La Francesina') as Semele, Esther Young as both Ino and Juno, John Beard as Jupiter (and Apollo), Henry Reinhold as Cadmus (and Somnus), Daniel Sullivan as Athamas, and Christina Maria Avolio as Iris. The next day, Handel's staunch supporter Mary Delaney wrote to her sister that *Semele* 'is a delightful piece of music', and nine days later wrote again 'the more I hear it the better I like it', but also reported that 'Semele has a strong party against it, viz. the fine ladies, petit maîtres, and ignoramus's. All the opera people are enraged at Handel'. Even some of his supporters disapproved of the work. Delaney's husband, a Doctor of Divinity, did not think it proper

for him to attend a profane entertainment during Lent. Charles Jennens, the librettist of *Saul* and *Messiah*, took such exception to the immorality of *Semele* that he boycotted its only revival in December 1744, and many years later complained that it was ‘a bawdy Opera’.

From a certain point of view, the objectors had a fair point – the sexual innuendos about Semele’s romping with Jupiter described in ‘Endless pleasure’ remain as blatant today as they must have been in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the compassionate humour, sexiness and emotional insights into its motley personalities are exactly why ‘The Story of Semele’ is adored by modern audiences. This live recording made during a staged performance at Alexandra Palace on 2 May 2019 cuts small sections of recitative, and a few arias are omitted from Act I. John Eliot Gardiner chose a simple recitative alternative for Ino’s ‘Turn, hopeless lover’ (preserved in Handel’s autograph, perhaps it was envisaged for his only revival of *Semele* in December 1744 but probably not used); ‘Endless pleasure’ is reassigned from Semele to a voyeuristic augur (as in Congreve’s original libretto), Cupid’s languid ‘Come, Zephyrs, come’ is reinstated at the start of Act II scene 2 prior to the stage direction ‘Semele awakes and rises’ (Handel rejected and never performed it), and a passage that the composer deleted from the middle section of Jupiter’s ‘Where’er you walk’ is restored.

**David Vickers, co-editor of the Cambridge
Handel Encyclopedia**

“Kein Oratorium, sondern eine schlüpfrige Oper”

Charles Jennens,
Librettist des Messiahs

Es ist ironisch und sicherlich kein Zufall, dass die erste große, komplette Oper in englischer Sprache 1743 von Georg Friedrich Händel – einem deutschen Immigranten – komponiert wurde. Dieser näherte sich gerade dem Höhepunkt seines Schaffens; dies allerdings in selbstauferlegter Zurückgezogenheit von der toxischen Londoner Opernszene. *Semele* war sein trotziger Gegenangriff, gerichtet gegen all jene rivalisierenden aristokratischen Theaterbesitzer und Ensemble-Direktoren, welche jahrelang danach gestrebt hatten, ihn unter Kontrolle zu bringen. Es verwundert weiter nicht, dass Händel es vorzog, seine eigene Konzertsaison am Covent Garden ohne äußerliche Einmischungen zu bewerben und mit seinen handverlesenen Solisten, seinem Orchester und seinem Chor zu organisieren. *Semele* traf sein Publikum etwas unvorbereitet: Es handelte sich weder um eine herkömmliche, ‘ordentlich inszenierte’, italienische Oper (obwohl sie das in Händels Vorstellung und trotz des Vorhandenseins ausführlicher Regieanweisungen ganz klar war), noch um ein frommes Oratorium – auf dem alten Testament begründet und zur Fastenzeit passend. Weit gefehlt! Stattdessen wählte er eine profane, auf Ovid zurückgehende Geschichte, in welcher Götter und Sterbliche auf ein und derselben Ebene agieren. Sie benehmen sich schlecht und leidenschaftlich, aber auf eine Art und Weise, mit der jeder – bis auf das missmutige Publikum der damaligen Zeit oder später die scheinheiligen Viktorianer – etwas anfangen kann. Händel begab sich mit *Semele* auf Neuland: Es war eine neue Form des Musikdramas,

welche sich der besten Charakteristiken der italienischen Oper bediente und eine Synthese der englischen Masken- und Halboperntaditionen hervorbrachte (eine Vorgehensweise, an der er sich erstmals 25 Jahre vorher beim köstlichen *Acis and Galatea* versucht hatte). *Semeles* Partitur ist eine glorreiche Mischung aus unwiderstehlichen Solo-Arien – einige unter ihnen virtuose Herzsschlag-Momente, andere lyrisch, sinnlich und bewegend; Ensembles, Duette, begleitete Rezitative und (anders als seine Opern) imposante Chöre. Noch mehr als damals, vor nunmehr fast vierzig Jahren, als ich es erstmals aufführte und aufnahm, habe ich heute das Gefühl, dass *Semeles* Zeit nun endlich gekommen ist.

John Eliot Gardiner

Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome
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Synopsis

1. Akt

Kadmos, der König von Theben und seine Familie sind zum Tempel der Juno in Bötien gereist, um die Vermählung seiner Tochter Semele mit Prinz Athamas feierlich zu begehen. Die Priester und Wahrsager verkünden, dass die Omen für die Verbindung günstig scheinen, aber Semele hat eine Ausrede nach der anderen erfunden, um die Hochzeit herauszuzögern, da sie heimlich in Jupiter verliebt ist. Semele fleht Jupiter um Hilfe an, dessen Donner unterbricht die Zeremonie und löscht die Opfer-Flammen auf dem Altar seiner Gemahlin Juno. Die Priester raten allen, vom Tempel zu fliehen, aber der verzweifelnde Athamas und Semeles Schwester Ino bleiben zurück.

Ino gesteht dem erstaunten Athamas ihre Liebe. Kadmos unterbricht sie mit der schockierenden Neuigkeit, dass Semele, von azurblauen Flammen umgeben, von einem riesigen Adler entführt worden sei, der 'auf purpurfarbenen Schwingen herabfuhr' und einen 'himmlischen Duft und köstlichen Tau' zurückließ. Die Priester und Wahrsager bestimmen, dass der Adler Jupiter gewesen sein muss und man hört Semele verkünden, dass 'Semele da droben endloses Vergnügen' und 'endlose Liebe genießt.'

2. Akt

Die über den Ehebruch ihres Mannes verärgerte Juno hat ihrer Botin Iris befohlen, herauszufinden, wo Jupiter und Semele sind. Iris berichtet, dass Jupiter seiner neuen, sterblichen Geliebten einen kunstvollen, neuen Palast auf dem Berg Kithairon

erbaut habe und warnt, dass dieser von grimmigen Drachen bewacht sei, welche niemals schliefen. Die verärgerte Juno schwört Rache und eilt, Somnus, dem Gott des Schlafes, einen Besuch abzustatten, um sich dessen Unterstützung zu sichern.

Umsorgt von Gespielen und Zephyren sehnt sich Semele nach Jupiter. Er trifft in menschlicher Gestalt ein, versichert ihr seine Treue und erinnert sie daran, dass sie nur menschlich ist und zwischen ihren Liebesakten, Zeit zum Ruhen bedürfe. Semele bekundet ihm ihre Ergebenheit, offenbart ihm jedoch auch ihre Unzufriedenheit darüber, noch nicht unsterblich gemacht worden zu sein. Jupiter, der sich Semeles gefährlicher Ambitionen bewusst wird, verwandelt den Palast in Arkadien, bezirzt sie mit dessen ländlichen Freuden und ruft auf wundersame Weise ihre Schwester Ino herbei, um Semele Gesellschaft zu leisten. Die verzückte Ino beschreibt die himmlische Musik, welche sie auf dem Weg zum Berg Kithairon hörte, während sie von zwei geflügelten Zephyren getragen wurde. Die Schwestern und ein Chor von Nymphen und jungen Liebhabern singen von den Freuden der Musik.

3. Akt

In seiner höhlenreichen Wohnstatt wird Somnus, der Gott des Schlafes, von Junos und Iris' Ankunft rüde gestört. Er verweigert zunächst träge seine Mithilfe, erwacht aber dann zum Leben, als Juno ihm als Belohnung seine Lieblingsnymphe Pasithea verspricht. Juno befiehlt Somnus, Jupiter einen erotischen Traum zu schicken, welcher diesen verzweifelt nach Semeles Günten machen soll,

die er um jeden Preis genießen will. Juno greift sich Somnus' bleiernen Zauberstab, um die Drachen und Ino in Schlaf zu versetzen. Juno nimmt die Gestalt Inos an, tut so als ob sie glaube, Semele sei unsterblich gemacht worden und gibt ihr einen Zauberspiegel, welcher das törichte Mädchen glauben macht, sie sei nun sogar noch schöner als sonst. Juno empfiehlt Semele, wenn diese wirklich unsterblich werden wolle, Jupiter sexuelle Günte zu verweigern, bis dass dieser ihr jeden Wunsch gewährt, nach dem es ihr verlangt, und dass sie weiterhin fordern solle, dass er in seiner wahren, unverkleideten Gestalt zu ihr kommt ('gleich seiner selbst, der mächtige Donnerer'). Semele nimmt diesen Rat begierig an. Juno entfernt sich, als sie Jupiter nahen spürt.

Entflammt vom Verlangen nach Semele, zeigt sich Jupiter erstaunt, als diese sich ihm gegenüber kalt verhält. Überstürzt schwört er einen unwiderruflichen Eid, um ihr zu gewähren, was auch immer sie begehrt, und sie verlangt, dass er sie in seiner natürlichen Gestalt besuche. Er reagiert mit Grauen, da er weiß, dass seine Donnerschläge sie sicherlich töten werden, aber sie weigert sich, auf die Stimme der Vernunft zu hören, weil sie davon ausgeht, dass Jupiter ihr keine Unsterblichkeit gewähren will. Allein gelassen, versucht Jupiter einen Weg zu finden, Semeles Leben zu schonen, aber erkennt bedrückt, dass 'sie als Oper fallen muss'. Juno freut sich hämisch triumphierend ihres Sieges. Semele sieht Jupiter als feurige Blitz- und Donner-Wolke herunterfahren, beklagt ihre Torheit und stirbt von Flammen verzehrt. Ino verkündet die tragische

Neuigkeit von Semeles Verderben, als sie sicher nach Bötien zurückgekehrt ist. Indessen brachte das Ganze auch etwas Gutes hervor: Jupiter hat festgelegt, dass Ino und Athamas getraut werden müssen, und Apollo prophezeit, dass Bacchus – Gott des Weines und ungeborenes Kind von Semele und Jupiter – aus Semeles Asche aufsteigen wird, um der Erde ein Vergnügen, 'mächtiger als Liebe', zu bringen.

David Vickers

Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome

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Händel und *Die Geschichte von Semele*

Händel stellte das Komponieren und Aufführen italienischer Opern in London nach 1741 ein und entschied sich, sein musikalisches Hauptschaffen auf nicht-inszenierte, englische Theaterwerke zu begrenzen. Während des Sommers 1743 versuchte der Earl of Middlesex den achtundfünfzigjährigen Komponisten mit einem Angebot über £1,000 zu verlocken, zwei neue Opern zu schreiben. Händel nahm zunächst den Auftrag an, änderte dann aber seine Meinung – wies sogar sturerweise die persönlichen Bitten des Prince of Wales zurück – und organisierte stattdessen seine eigene Fasten-Serie von zwölf Abonnement-Konzerten am Covent Garden.

Zur ungefähr gleichen Zeit wie die Zurückweisung der wiederholten Bitten der Operngesellschaft von Lord Middlesex komponierte Händel das offenkundig opernhafte Unterhaltungskonzert *Semele* zu einem altenglischen Opernlibretto des Bühnenauteurs William Congreve (1670–1729) – eine ganz außergewöhnliche Entscheidung, welche die meist adeligen Lobbyisten der italienischen Oper stark verärgert haben muss. Er begann mit dem Schreiben der Musik am 3. Juni 1743, stellte den ersten Akt am 13. Juni, den zweiten am 20. Juni und die komplette Partitur des ganzen Werkes am 4. Juli fertig; die Fertigstellung dauerte also insgesamt nur einen Monat und einen Tag.

Congreve war Sir John Vanbrughs Partner bei der Planung, beim Bau und bei der künstlerischen Leitung des Queen's Theatres auf dem Haymarket gewesen (nach der Regentschaft von George I in King's Theatre umbenannt). Für dieses Theater komponierte Händel auch die meisten seiner

italienischen Opern. Als es erstmals geplant worden war, hatte man allerdings gehofft, dass diese Aufführungsstätte die Entwicklung komplett gesungener, englischsprachiger Opern fördern würde. Mit diesem Ziel im Kopf begründete Congreve seine *Semele*, eine Oper auf einer Fabel in Ovids *Metamorphosen* und fasste ihren Inhalt zusammen.

Nach Jupiters Liebschaft mit Europa, Tochter des Agenors, König von Phönizien, erzürnt er Juno erneut durch eine weitere Affäre in der selben Familie; namentlich mit Semele, Europas Nichte und Tochter des Kadmos, König von Theben.

Semele ist im Begriff Athamas zu ehelichen – ein Bund, der gerade in Junos (Göttin der Ehe) Tempel feierlich begangen werden soll, als Jupiter, mit Hilfe falscher Omen die Zeremonie unterbricht; danach bringt er Semele zu einer privaten Wohnstätte, wo sie unterkommt.

Juno nimmt nach zahlreichen unterschiedlichen Versuchen letztlich die Gestalt und Stimme Inos, Semeles Schwester an. Mit Hilfe dieser Verkleidung und geschickter Anspielungen schafft sie es, Semele zu überzeugen mit ihr zusammen eine Bitte an Jupiter zu richten, die in Semeles völligem Ruin enden muss, so sie denn gewährt wird.

Das Libretto wurde erstmals von John Eccles (ca. 1668 – 1735) vertont, dem führenden Londoner Theatermusik-Komponisten nach dem Tod Henry Purcells.

Diese fantastische Extravaganz war höchstwahrscheinlich für die Feierlichkeiten anlässlich der Eröffnung des neuen Queen's Theatres vorgesehen, welches für gute Akustik konzipiert worden war und aufwendige szenische Umgestaltungen ermöglichen sollte. Schließlich wurde Eccles aber mit der Musik nicht rechtzeitig fertig. Als das Werk im Januar 1707 schließlich für Proben verfügbar war, hatte der desillusionierte Congreve das Queen's Theatre Projekt verlassen. Die Schauspieler/Sängerin Anne Bracegirdle (für welche die Titelpartie geschrieben worden war) war im Begriff sich zur Ruhe zu setzen und am Theater waren nur gesprochene Schauspiele erlaubt, nachdem Lord Chamberlain dem rivalisierenden Drury Lane Theatre ein temporäres Monopol auf Oper eingeräumt hatte.

Der Manager des Drury Lane Theatres Christopher Rich verständigte sich mit Eccles darauf, *Semele* zu produzieren, aber das klägliche Scheitern Addisons *Rosamunde* im März 1707 entmutigte Rich, noch eine weitere komplett gesungene englischsprachige Oper zu riskieren und so wurde *Semele* auf unbestimmte Zeit zurückgestellt. Entnervt von den Spielereien der Theaterpolitik verließ Eccles London und verbrachte angeblich den Großteil seiner Zeit beim Angeln.

Congreve war ebenfalls zutiefst enttäuscht über das Scheitern des Projekts, *Semele* auf die Bühne zu bringen, doch sein Libretto wurde in *The Second Volume of the Works of Mr. William Congreve* 1710 gedruckt. Der Autor fügte dem Ganzen ein lateinisches Epigramm aus Senecas Episteln

bei, in welchem er sich über die Wankelmütigkeit des öffentlichen Geschmacks beschwert: „ Wir entsagen der Natur und überantworten uns der Öffentlichkeit – ein schlechter Ratgeber in jederlei Hinsicht und dabei auch noch – wie bei allem – höchst unbeständig.“

Der altmodische Text war zu kurz um den Erwartungen von Händels Publikum zu genügen, also bedurfte es einiger Anpassungen und insbesondere des Hinzufügens mehrerer Chöre und Da-Capo-Arien. Die anonyme Adaption von Händels Text bediente sich vernünftigerweise anderer Dichtungen aus Congreves Feder: Semeles 'My racking thoughts' wurde der Elegie *To Sleep* entnommen, Inos Rezitativ 'O'er many states' entstammt Congreves Übersetzung von Homers *Hymne an die Venus*, ein Großteil des Chores 'Oh terror and astonishment' kommt aus *Of Pleasing: an epistle to Sir Richard Temple* und Inos 'But hark! the heavenly sphere turns round' aus der Ode *On Mrs Arabella Hunt, singing*. Drei weitere, neue Texte wurden Congreves Werken nicht entnommen: Jupiters 'Where'er you walk' wurde von Alexander Popes Pastorale *Summer* adaptiert, wohingegen Athamas' 'Despair no more shall wound me' und der Schlusschor 'Happy, happy shall we be' allem Anschein nach neu geschrieben worden waren.

Die Musik beweist Händels messerscharfe, dramatische Instinkte; zweifelsohne ergötzte er sich an den verschiedenen Zutaten des Librettos: übernatürliche Begebenheiten, herzlicher Humor, extrovertierter Esprit, erotische Zärtlichkeit, unerfülltes Sehnen, mörderische Eifersucht, kokette Eitelkeit, tragische Verletzlichkeit, Euphorie und Verlust.

Er widmete sich der Komposition seiner Musik mit großer Sorgfalt. Das zeigt sich im emotionalen oder seelischen Zustand der Charaktere, die mit einer reichen Palette an unterschiedlichen Orchesterbesetzungen in den Streichern und im Continuo gezeichnet wurden. Oboen und Fagotte werden nur sehr sparsam eingesetzt und Bläser tauchen nur in zwei Chören auf.

In *Semele* gibt es mehr begleitete Rezitative als in allen anderen seiner Theaterwerke: Iris' fantastische Beschreibung der Drachen, welche Semeles Palast bewachen und das Zwinkern ihrer 'thousand fiery eyes which never know repose', ist äußerst geistreich illustriert. Junos explosive Rachsucht wird sofort ersichtlich in ihrem 'No more – I'll hear no more' und die dösige langsame Musik, welche Somnus' verschlafene Höhle beschreibt – unvergesslicher Einsatz von Fagotten – wird rüde von beunruhigenden Streichern unterbrochen, welche Junos aufgewühltes Eintreffen und ihre Forderung 'Somnus awake!' ankündigen – und dennoch erweist es sich als unmöglich, den Gott des Schlafes aus seinem Schlummer zu erwecken ('Leave me, loathsome light'); bis dass die Erwähnung der lieblichen Nymphe Pasithea ihn dann doch noch aus seiner Lethargie reißt. Jupiters 'Ah! whither is she gone' zeigt seine letztendliche Resignation vor der Tatsache, dass er die Sterbliche, die er liebt nicht retten kann (der wiederauftretende Abschnitt "'Tis past, 'tis past recall, She must a victim fall!' offenbart eine bis dahin unerwartete Aufrichtigkeit und anrührende Tiefe in dem sonst so umtriebigen Gott).

Semeles Untergang in 'Ah me! too late I now

repent' illustriert das tragische Schicksal der koketten, eitlen und ambitionierten Sterblichen, deren Torheit ihren Höhepunkt erreicht, als sie – von ihrer eigenen Lieblichkeit eingenommen – in einen verwunschenen Spiegel blickt ('Myself I shall adore').

Die erste Aufführung von *Semele* erfolgte im Theatre-Royal in Covent Garden am 10. Februar 1744. An diesem Tag stand in der *London Daily Post* zu lesen, dass das Publikum für einen Schilling das Nachschlagewerk 'Die Geschichte von Semele; geänderte Fassung der Semele von Herrn Congreve' erwerben könne. Des weiteren kündigte die Zeitung an, dass das Werk 'nach Art und Weise eines Oratoriums' zur Aufführung kommen würde. Händel hütete sich, es öffentlich eine Konzertoper oder ein weltliches englischsprachiges Musikdrama zu nennen, da solche Art der Unterhaltung während der Fastenzeit verboten war – allerdings war er auch vernünftig genug, es nicht als tatsächliches Oratorium zu deklarieren. Seine Besetzung bestand aus der dreisprachigen Elisabeth Duparc ('La Francescina') als Semele, Esther Young als Ino und Juno, John Beard als Jupiter (und Apollo), Henry Reinhold als Cadmus (und Somnus), Daniel Sullivan als Athamus, und Christina Maria Avolio als Iris.

Am nächsten Tag schrieb Händels treue Anhängerin Mary Delaney an ihre Schwester, dass *Semele* 'ein entzückendes Stück Musik ist' und neun Tage später wieder 'je mehr ich es höre, desto besser gefällt es mir', doch berichtete sie auch, dass 'Semele eine starke Gruppierung gegen sich hat, namentlich die feinen Damen, die kleinen Meister und die Ignoranten. All die

Opernleute sind erzürnt über Händel'. Sogar einige seiner Anhänger missbilligten das Werk. Delanys Ehemann, ein Doktor der Theologie, betrachtete es für sich als unangebracht, während der Fastenzeit solch profaner Unterhaltung nachzugehen. Charles Jennens, dem Librettisten von *Saul* and *Messiah*, widerstrebte die Unsittlichkeit *Semeles* so nachhaltig, dass er die einzige Wiederaufnahme im Dezember 1744 boykottierte und sich viele Jahre später beschwerte, dass es eine 'schlüpfrige Oper' sei. In gewisser Hinsicht hatten die Gegner natürlich auch nicht ganz Unrecht – die sexuellen Anspielungen bei Semeles' Herumtollen mit Jupiter, welche in 'Endless pleasure' beschrieben werden, bleiben heute genau so offensichtlich wie sie es im 18. Jahrhundert gewesen sein müssen. Dennoch sind es gerade der einfühlsame Humor, die Sinnlichkeit und die Einsichten ins Gefühlsleben der bunt zusammengewürfelten Charaktere, welche 'Die Geschichte von Semele' beim modernen Publikum so enorm beliebt machen.

In vorliegender Live-Aufnahme einer inszenierten Aufführung im Alexandra Palace am 2. Mai 2019 wurden kurze Rezitativ-Passagen geschnitten und wenige Arien aus dem ersten Akt weggelassen. John Eliot Gardiner wählte eine einfache Rezitativ-Alternative für Inos 'Turn, hopeless lover' (in Händels Originalhandschrift erhalten, war dieses Rezitativ vielleicht für seine einzige Wiederaufnahme von *Semele* im Dezember 1744 vorgesehen, wurde wahrscheinlich aber nicht verwendet); 'Endless pleasure' ist einem voyeuristischen Wahrsager neu zugeteilt (anstatt Semeles) – wie in Congreves Original-Libretto;

Cupids kraftloses 'Come, Zephyrs, come' ist zu Beginn des zweiten Aktes in der zweiten Szene wieder eingefügt – unmittelbar vor der Regieanweisung 'Semele wacht auf und erhebt sich' (Händel sonderte es aus und führte es nie auf), ebenso ist eine Passage, welche der

Komponist aus dem Mittelabschnitt Jupiters 'Where'er you walk' entfernte, wiederhergestellt.

David Vickers, Mitherausgeber der Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia



« Pas un oratorio, mais
un opéra obscène »

Charles Jennens, librettiste du *Messie*

L'ironie a voulu – et ce n'est certainement pas un hasard – que le premier grand opéra véritable en langue anglaise ait été composé en 1743 par Haendel, un immigré allemand bientôt au faite de ses facultés, mais qui s'était volontairement retiré de la scène lyrique londonienne délétaire. *Semele* était son arrogante et vigoureuse riposte à ceux qui, pendant des années, avaient essayé de le contrôler : les propriétaires du théâtre aristocratique rival et les directeurs de compagnie. Haendel – et ce n'est pas pour surprendre – préféra promouvoir et organiser sa propre saison annuelle de concerts à Covent Garden sans ingérences, et avec ses propres solistes triés sur le volet, orchestre et chœur. *Semele* prit son public au dépourvu : ce n'était pas un opéra italien conventionnel correctement « mis en scène » (même si ce l'était clairement dans l'imagination de Haendel, et malgré la présence de didascalies élaborées) ; ce n'était pas non plus un oratorio pieux fondé sur l'Ancien Testament, conçu sur mesure pour la période du Carême. Loin de là. Le compositeur choisit plutôt une histoire « profane » fondée sur Ovide, dans laquelle dieux et mortels opèrent au même niveau, se conduisant mal et passionnément, mais de manières que tout le monde peut comprendre – sauf le public mécontent de l'époque, ou, par la suite, les victoriens bien-pensants. Haendel défrichait des terres vierges avec *Semele* : c'était une nouvelle forme de drame musical, empruntant les meilleurs éléments de l'opéra italien et créant une synthèse des traditions anglaise du masque et du « semi-opéra » (qu'il avait abordée pour la première fois dans le

délicieux *Acis and Galatea* vingt-cinq ans plus tôt). La partition de *Semele* est un superbe mélange d'irrésistibles airs solistes – tantôt des numéros virtuoses exceptionnels, tantôt des morceaux lyriques et évocateurs –, d'ensembles, de duos, de récitatifs accompagnés et (à la différence de ses opéras) de chœurs imposants. Plus encore que lorsque je l'ai dirigé et enregistré il y a près de quarante ans, j'ai le sentiment que l'heure de *Semele* a enfin sonné.

John Eliot Gardiner



Philharmonie de Paris © Éric Larrayadiou

Synopsis

Acte I

Cadmus, roi de Thèbes, et sa famille ont fait le voyage jusqu'au temple de Junon en Béotie pour célébrer le mariage de sa fille Sémélé avec le prince Athamas. Les prêtres et les augures proclament que les présages pour le mariage semblent favorables, mais Sémélé invente une excuse après l'autre pour le retarder, car elle est secrètement amoureuse de Jupiter. Sémélé implore l'aide de Jupiter, dont le tonnerre interrompt la cérémonie et éteint les flammes sacrificielles sur l'autel de son épouse Junon. Les prêtres conseillent à tous de fuir le temple, mais, désespéré, Athamas s'attarde avec Ino, la sœur de Sémélé. Ino étonne Athamas en lui révélant qu'elle l'aime. Cadmus intervient alors pour leur faire part d'une nouvelle consternante : Sémélé, entourée de flammes d'azur, a été enlevée par un aigle géant, « descendu sur des ailes pourpres » et laissant « une odeur céleste et une rosée divine ». Les prêtres et les augures reconnaissent Jupiter en cet aigle, et on entend Sémélé annoncer que « Sémélé goûte là-haut un plaisir infini, un amour infini ».

Acte II

Junon, courroucée par les infidélités de son époux, a ordonné à sa messagère Iris de découvrir où se trouvent Jupiter et Sémélé. Iris rapporte que Jupiter a fait construire à sa nouvelle amante mortelle un nouveau palais somptueux sur le mont Cithéron, et la prévient qu'il est gardé par de féroces dragons qui ne dorment jamais. Junon

enrage et jure vengeance, puis s'empresse d'aller trouver Somnus, dieu du sommeil, pour solliciter son aide. Sémélé, suivie d'amours et de zéphyr, se languit de Jupiter. Celui-ci arrive, sous forme humaine, l'assure de sa fidélité, et lui rappelle qu'elle est une simple mortelle et qu'il lui faut du temps pour se reposer entre leurs ébats. Sémélé lui déclare son dévouement, mais lui dit qu'elle est mécontente de ne pas avoir été rendue immortelle. Jupiter, reconnaissant à Sémélé de dangereuses ambitions, transforme le palais en Arcadie, la charme avec ses délices pastorales et convoque par magie sa sœur Ino pour lui tenir compagnie. Enchantée, Ino décrit la musique céleste qu'elle a entendue en route pour le mont Cithéron, portée par deux zéphyr ailés. Les deux sœurs, avec un chœur de nymphes et de bergers, chantent les joies de la musique.

Acte III

Dans sa demeure caverneuse, Somnus, dieu du sommeil, est grossièrement dérangé par l'arrivée de Junon et d'Iris. Dans sa léthargie, Somnus refuse d'aider Junon, mais s'anime quand Junon lui promet en récompense sa nymphe favorite, Pasithéa. Junon ordonne à Somnus d'inspirer à Jupiter un rêve érotique qui lui donnera envie de jouir des faveurs de Sémélé à tout prix. Junon prend la baguette magique en plomb de Somnus pour endormir les dragons et Ino. Junon assume les traits d'Ino, feint de croire que Sémélé a été rendue immortelle et lui donne un miroir magique qui fait croire à la jeune fille naïve qu'elle est encore

plus belle que d'habitude. Junon lui explique que, si elle souhaite vraiment devenir immortelle, elle doit refuser ses faveurs à Jupiter jusqu'à ce qu'il promette d'exaucer tout souhait qu'elle exprime, et demander qu'il vienne à elle sous sa vraie forme non déguisée (« tel que lui-même, puissant maître du tonnerre »). Sémélé s'empresse d'accepter ce conseil. Junon s'en va en sentant Jupiter approcher. Brûlant de désir pour Sémélé, Jupiter s'étonne de la voir réagir froidement. Sans réfléchir, il fait le serment irrévocable de lui accorder quoi qu'elle désire, et elle exige alors qu'il vienne à elle sous ses traits naturels. Il est saisi d'horreur, sachant que ses coups de foudre vont certainement la tuer, mais elle refuse d'entendre raison, pensant que Jupiter ne souhaite pas lui accorder l'immortalité. Resté seul, Jupiter essaie de trouver le moyen de sauver la vie de Sémélé, mais comprend avec consternation qu'« elle doit tomber en victime ». Junon triomphe et jubile. Sémélé voit Jupiter descendre sous forme d'un nuage ardent d'éclairs et de tonnerre, se lamente sur sa folie, et meurt consumée par les flammes. Ino, rentrée sans encombre en Béotie, annonce la tragique nouvelle de la mort de Sémélé. Il en est néanmoins ressorti un peu de bien : Jupiter a ordonné qu'Ino et Athamas soient unis, et Apollon prédit que Bacchus, dieu du vin et enfant à naître de Sémélé et Jupiter, surgira des cendres de Sémélé pour donner à la terre un plaisir « plus puissant que l'amour ».

David Vickers

Haendel et *L'Histoire de Sémélé*

Après 1741, Haendel cessa de composer et de donner des opéras italiens à Londres, et décida alors de confiner l'essentiel de sa production musicale à des œuvres théâtrales anglaises sans mise en scène. Au cours de l'été 1743, le comte de Middlesex tenta d'inciter le compositeur de cinquante-huit ans à sortir de la retraite qu'il s'était lui-même imposée en tant que compositeur d'opéras en lui offrant mille livres pour deux nouveaux opéras. Haendel commença par accepter, puis changea d'avis – restant même sourd aux supplications personnelles du prince de Galles – et organisa plutôt sa propre série de douze concerts d'abonnement à Covent Garden pendant le Carême.

C'est à peu près au moment où il rejetait ces demandes répétées de la compagnie d'opéra de Lord Middlesex que Haendel composa *Semele*, divertissement de concert ouvertement opératique, écrit sur un vieux livret d'opéra anglais du dramaturge William Congreve (1670-1729) – décision extraordinaire, qui dut exaspérer les partisans de l'opéra italien au sein de la noblesse. Il commença à écrire la musique le 3 juin 1743, acheva l'acte I le 13 juin, l'acte II le 20 juin, et termina la partition complète le 4 juillet ; la composition tout entière ne lui demanda donc qu'un mois et un jour.

Congreve avait été l'associé de Sir John Vanburgh pour la conception, la construction et la direction artistique du Queen's Theatre dans le Haymarket (rebaptisé King's Theatre après l'avènement de George I^{er}). C'est le théâtre pour lequel Haendel composa la plupart de ses opéras

italiens ; mais, quand il fut conçu en 1704, on espérait que la salle favoriserait le développement de l'opéra anglais entièrement chanté. Avec ce but en tête, Congreve fonda *Semele*, *An Opera* sur une fable des *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide dont il résumait ainsi l'action :

Après ses amours avec Europe, fille d'Agenor, roi de Phénicie, Jupiter provoque de nouveau la fureur de Junon avec sa nouvelle affaire au sein de la même famille : à savoir avec Sémélé, nièce d'Europe et fille de Cadmus, roi de Thèbes. Sémélé est sur le point de se marier avec Athamas ; cette union doit être célébrée au temple de Junon, déesse du mariage, lorsque Jupiter interrompt la cérémonie avec de mauvais présages, et transporte ensuite Sémélé dans un séjour privé qu'il lui a préparé. Junon, après de nombreuses machinations, assume la forme et la voix d'Ino, sœur de Sémélé ; avec l'aide de ce déguisement et d'habiles insinuations, elle la persuade de faire à Jupiter une demande qui, lorsqu'elle sera exaucée, signera sa perte complète.

Le livret fut mis en musique une première fois par John Eccles (v. 1668-1735), le principal compositeur pour la scène à Londres après la mort de Henry Purcell. Cette extravagance fabuleuse était probablement destinée à célébrer l'ouverture du nouveau Queen's Theatre, conçu pour avoir une bonne acoustique et permettre des changements de décor élaborés. En l'occurrence, Eccles n'acheva pas la musique à temps. Au moment

où elle était prête à être répétée en janvier 1707, Congreve, désillusionné, avait renoncé au projet pour le Queen's Theatre, l'actrice-cantatrice Anne Bracegirdle (pour qui fut écrit le rôle-titre) était sur le point de se retirer, et seules les pièces parlées étaient autorisées au théâtre après que le lord-chambellan eut accordé au théâtre concurrent de Drury Lane un monopole provisoire sur l'opéra. Le directeur de Drury Lane, Christopher Rich, convint avec Eccles de produire *Semele*, mais l'échec désastreux de *Rosamund* d'Addison en mars 1707 dissuada Rich de prendre le risque d'un nouvel opéra anglais entièrement chanté, si bien que *Semele* fut définitivement abandonné. Lassé des manigances de la politique théâtrale, Eccles quitta Londres et passa, dit-on, l'essentiel de son temps à pêcher. Congreve fut profondément déçu lui aussi par l'échec de *Semele*, mais son livret fut imprimé dans *The Second Volume of the Works of Mr. William Congreve* (1710), pour lequel l'auteur ajouta une épigramme latine tirée des *Épîtres* de Sénèque, regrettant l'inconstance des goûts du public : « Nous délaissions la nature et nous en remettons au public, un mauvais guide en tout et, en ceci, comme toujours, très contradictoire. »

Le texte démodé était trop bref pour répondre aux attentes du public de Haendel, et nécessita donc quelques adaptations, notamment l'ajout de davantage de chœurs et d'airs da capo. L'adaptateur anonyme du livret pour Haendel puisa judicieusement des textes supplémentaires à d'autres poèmes de Congreve : l'air « My racking thoughts » de Sémélé provient de l'élégie *To Sleep* ; le récitatif « O'er many states » d'Ino, de la



traduction anglaise faite par Congreve de l'*Hymne à Venus* homérique ; l'essentiel du chœur « Oh terror and astonishment », de *Of Pleasing : an epistle to Sir Richard Temple* ; l'air « But hark ! the heavenly sphere turns round » d'Ino, de l'ode *On Mrs Arabella Hunt, singing*. Trois nouveaux textes ne sont pas empruntés aux œuvres de Congreve : l'air « Where'er you walk » de Jupiter fut adapté de la pastorale *Summer* d'Alexander Pope, et il semble que l'air « Despair no more shall wound me » d'Athamas et le chœur final, « Happy, happy shall we be », aient été nouvellement écrits.

La musique prouve que les instincts dramatiques de Haendel étaient extrêmement affûtés, et il savoura à l'évidence les ingrédients du livret : événements surnaturels, humour affectueux, esprit extraverti, tendresse amoureuse, désir inassouvi, jalousie meurtrière, vanité coquette, vulnérabilité tragique, euphorie et perte. Il composa avec grand soin sa musique, qui illustre la situation émotionnelle ou psychologique des personnages en utilisant la formation orchestrale des cordes et continuo de tout un ensemble de manières différentes ; les hautbois et les bassons sont employés très parcimonieusement, et les cuivres ne sont présents que dans deux chœurs.

Il y a dans *Semele* plus de récitatifs accompagnés que dans toute autre œuvre théâtrale de Haendel : le fabuleux récit d'Iris évoquant les dragons qui gardent le palais de Sémélé, et le scintillement de leurs « mille yeux ardents qui ne connaissent jamais de repos » sont illustrés avec beaucoup d'esprit ; le caractère vindicatif explosif de Junon est aussitôt apparent dans son récitatif

« No more – I'll hear no more » ; la musique lente et somnolente qui dépeint la grotte endormie de Somnus, avec un usage mémorable des bassons, est grossièrement interrompue par un tourbillon de cordes qui annoncent l'arrivée et l'injonction agitée de Junon : « Somnus awake ! » – et pourtant le dieu du sommeil semble impossible à éveiller (« Leave me, loathsome light ») jusqu'à ce que l'évocation de la belle nymphe Pasithéa le tire de sa léthargie. Le récitatif accompagné « Ah ! whither is she gone » de Jupiter le montre résigné à ne pouvoir sauver la femme mortelle qu'il aime (la section « 'Tis past, 'tis past recall, She must a victim fall ! », qui revient à plusieurs reprises, révèle une sincérité et une profondeur poignante jusque-là insoupçonnés chez ce dieu dévergondé). La mort de Sémélé dans « Ah me ! too late I now repent » est la disparition tragique de la mortelle volage, vaniteuse et ambitieuse dont la folie touche à son comble lorsqu'elle est ravie par sa propre beauté en se regardant dans un miroir enchanté (« Myself I shall adore »).

La création de *Semele* fut donnée au Theatre-Royal de Covent Garden le 10 février 1744. Ce jour-là, le *London Daily Post* annonçait que pour un shilling le public pouvait acquérir le livret de « *L'Histoire de Sémélé* ; d'après la *Sémélé* de M. Congreve » ; le journal ajoutait que l'œuvre serait donnée « à la manière d'un oratorio ». Haendel prit soin de ne pas la qualifier publiquement d'opéra en concert ou de drame musical profane anglais, car de tels divertissements étaient interdits pendant le Carême, mais il savait bien qu'il ne pouvait la décrire comme un véritable oratorio. Sa distribution

comprenait la soprano trilingue Élisabeth Duparc (« La Francescina ») en Sémélé, Esther Young en Ino et Junon, John Beard en Jupiter (et Apollon), Henry Reinhold en Cadmus (et Somnus), Daniel Sullivan en Athamas, et Christina Maria Avolio en Iris. Le lendemain, Mary Delany, indéfectible soutien de Haendel, écrivit à sa sœur que *Semele* « est un morceau de musique charmant », ajoutant neuf jours plus tard que « plus je l’entends, et plus je l’aime » ; mais elle rapporta aussi que « *Semele* a un fort parti contre elle, à savoir les belles dames, les petits maîtres et les ignorants. Tout le monde de l’opéra enrage contre Haendel ». Même certains de ses partisans réprouvaient l’œuvre. L’époux de Mary Delany, docteur en théologie, ne trouvait pas convenable d’assister à un divertissement profane pendant le Carême. Quant à Charles Jennens, le librettiste de *Saul* et du *Messie*, il était tellement heurté par l’immoralité de *Semele* qu’il refusa d’assister à la seule reprise en décembre 1744, et de nombreuses années plus tard se plaignit que c’était « un opéra obscène ». D’un certain point de vue, les opposants n’avaient pas tort – les allusions érotiques aux ébats de Sémélé avec Jupiter décrits dans « Endless pleasure » restent aussi directes aujourd’hui qu’elles devaient l’être au XVIII^e siècle. Néanmoins, l’humour compatissant, la sensualité, et l’intelligence des émotions de ses personnages bigarrés sont précisément les raisons pour lesquelles le public moderne adore *L’Histoire de Sémélé*. Cet enregistrement live, réalisé lors d’une représentation donnée à l’Alexandra Palace Theatre le 2 mai 2019, omet de petites sections de récitatif et quelques airs de l’acte I. John Eliot Gardiner

a choisi un simple récitatif pour « Turn, hopeless lover » d’Ino (préservé dans l’autographe de Haendel, peut-être envisagé pour sa seule reprise de *Semele* en décembre 1744, mais probablement non utilisé) ; « Endless pleasure » est confié à un augure voyeur (comme dans le livret original de Congreve), plutôt qu’à Sémélé ; l’air languissant de Cupidon, « Come, Zephyrs, come », est déplacé au début de l’acte II scène 2, avant l’indication scénique « Sémélé s’éveille et se lève » (Haendel le rejeta et ne le donna jamais), et un passage que le compositeur supprima de la section centrale de l’air « Where’er you walk » de Jupiter est rétabli.

David Vickers, coéditeur de The Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia

CD1 Act I

ACT ONE

1 Overture

2 Gavotte

Scene 1

*Cadmus, Athamas, Semele, Ino and
Chorus of Priests.*

*The scene is the temple of Juno in Bœotia.
Near the altar is a golden image of the goddess.
The Priests are in their solemnities, as after
a sacrifice newly offered: flames arise from
the altar and the statue of Juno is seen to bow.*

3 Accompagnato

Priest

Behold! Auspicious flashes rise,
Juno accepts our sacrifice;
The grateful odour swift ascends,
And see, the golden image bends!

4 Chorus of Priests

Lucky omens bless our rites,
And sure success shall crown your loves;
Peaceful days and fruitful nights
Attend the pair that she approves.

5 Recitative, arioso and duet

Cadmus

Daughter, obey,
Hear and obey!
With kind consenting
Ease a parent's care;

Invent no new delay,
On this auspicious day.

Athamas

Oh, hear a faithful lover's prayer!
On this auspicious day
Invent no new delay.

6 Accompagnato

Semele (apart)

Ah me!

What refuge now is left me?
How various, how tormenting
Are my miseries!
O Jove, assist me!
Can Semele forego thy love,
And to a mortal's passion yield?
Thy vengeance will o'ertake such perfidy.
If I deny, my father's wrath I fear.

7 Air

Semele

O Jove! In pity teach me which to choose,
Incline me to comply, or help me to refuse!

8 Recitative

Ino

Alas! she yields,
And has undone me!
I cannot longer hide my passion,
It must have vent,
Or inward burning
Will consume me.
O Athamas,
I cannot utter it!

Athamas

On me fair Ino calls
With mournful accent,
Her colour fading,
And her eyes o'erflowing!

Ino

O Semele!

Semele

On me she calls,
Yet seems to shun me!
What would my sister?
Speak!

Ino

Thou hast undone me!

9 Quartet

Cadmus

Why dost thou thus untimely grieve,
And all our solemn rites profane?
Can he, or she thy woes relieve,
Or I? Of whom dost thou complain?

Ino

Of all; But all, I fear, in vain.

Athamas

Can I thy woes relieve?

Semele

Can I assuage thy pain?

Cadmus, Athamas, Semele

Of whom dost thou complain?

Ino

Of all! but all, I fear, in vain.

Thunder is heard at a distance and the fire is extinguished on the altar.

10 Chorus of Priests

Avert these omens, all ye pow'rs!
Some god averse our holy rites controls;
O'erwhelm'd with sudden night the day expires,
Ill-boding thunder on the right hand rolls,
And Jove himself descends in show'rs
To quench our late propitious fires.

Flames are rekindled on the altar.

11 Accompagnato

Cadmus

Again auspicious flashes rise,
Juno accepts our sacrifice.

The fire is again extinguished.

Again the sickly flame decaying dies:
Juno assents, but angry Jove denies.

Recitative

Athamas

Thy aid, pronubial Juno, Athamas implores!

Semele (apart)
Thee, Jove, and thee alone, thy Semele adores!

A loud clap of thunder; the altar sinks.

12 Chorus of Priests

Cease, cease your vows, 'tis impious to proceed;
Begone, and fly this holy place with speed!
This dreadful conflict is of dire presage;
Begone, and fly from Jove's impending rage!

Exeunt.

Scene 2

Athamas and Ino.

13 Recitative

Ino

Turn, hopeless lover, turn thy eyes,
And see a maid bemoan,
In flowing tears and aching sighs,
Thy woes too like her own.

Recitative

Athamas

She weeps!
The gentle maid, in tender pity,
Weeps to behold my misery!
So Semele would melt
To see another mourn.

14 Air

Athamas

Your tuneful voice my tale would tell,

In pity of my sad despair;
And with sweet melody compel
Attention from the flying fair.
Your tuneful voice. . . *da capo*

15 Recitative

Ino

Too well I see,
Thou wilt not understand me.
Whence could proceed such tenderness?
Whence such compassion?
Insensible! ingrate!
Ah no, I cannot blame thee:
For by effects, unknown before,
Who could the hidden cause explore,
Or think that love could act so strange a part,
To plead for pity in a rival's heart?

Athamas

Ah me, what have I heard!
She does her passion own!

16 Duet

Ino

You've undone me;
Look not on me;
Guilt upbraiding,
Shame invading.

Athamas

With my life I would atone
Pains you've borne, to me unknown.
Cease to shun me.

Both
Love alone
Has both undone!

Scene 3

To them Enter Cadmus, attended.

17 Recitative

Cadmus

Ah, wretched prince, doom'd to disastrous love!
Ah me, of parents most forlorn!
Prepare, O Athamas, to prove
The sharpest pangs that e'er were borne,
Prepare with me our common loss to mourn!

Athamas

Can fate, or Semele, invent
Another, yet another punishment?

Accompagnato

Cadmus

Wing'd with our fears and pious haste,
From Juno's fane we fled.
Scarce we the brazen gates had pass'd,
When Semele around her head
With azure flames was grac'd,
Whose lambent glories in her tresses play'd.
While this we saw with dread surprise,
Swifter than lightning downward tending,
An eagle stoop'd, of mighty size,
On purple wings descending,
Like gold his beak, like stars shone forth his eyes,
His silver plummy breast with snow contending.
Sudden he snatch'd the trembling maid,

And soaring from our sight convey'd,
Diffusing ever as he less'ning flew
Celestial odour and ambrosial dew.

Scene 4

Enter to them Chorus of Priests and Augurs.

18 Chorus of Priests and Augurs

Hail Cadmus, hail!
Jove salutes the Theban king!
Cease your mourning,
Joys returning,
Songs of mirth and triumph sing!
Hail Cadmus, hail!

19 Air and Chorus

Augur

Endless pleasure, endless love,
Semele enjoys above!
On her bosom Jove reclining,
Useless now his thunder lies;
To her arms his bolts resigning,
And his lightning to her eyes.

Priests and Augurs

Endless pleasure, endless love
Semele enjoys above!

Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome
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CD2 Act II

ACT TWO

1 Sinfonia

Scene 1

*The scene is a pleasant country.
Juno and Iris.*

2 Recitative

Juno
Iris, impatient of thy stay,
From Samos have I wing'd my way
To meet thy slow return.

Iris
With all his speed not yet the sun
Through half his race has run,
Since I, to execute thy dread command,
Have thrice encompass'd sea and land.

Juno
Say, where is Semele's abode?

Iris
Look, where Cithaeron proudly stands,
Bœotia parting from Cecropian lands.
High on the summit of that hill,
Beyond the reach of mortal eyes,
By Jove's command and Vulcan's skill,
Behold a new-erected palace rise!

3 Air

Iris
There, from mortal cares retiring,

She resides in sweet retreat.
On her pleasure, Jove requiring,
All the Loves and Graces wait.
There. . . *da capo*

Recitative

Juno
No more – I'll hear no more!

4 Accompagnato

Juno
Awake, Saturnia, from thy lethargy!
Seize, destroy the cursed Semele!
Scale proud Cithaeron's top:
Snatch her, tear her in thy fury,
And down to the flood of Acheron
Let her fall, let her fall, fall, fall,
Rolling down the depths of night,
Never more to behold the light.
If I th'imperial scepter sway, I swear by hell
(Tremble, thou universe, this oath to hear!)
Not one of curst Agenor's race to spare.

Recitative

Iris
Hear, mighty queen, while I recount
What obstacles you must surmount.

Accompagnato

Iris
With adamant the gates are barr'd,
Whose entrance two fierce dragons guard.
At each approach they lash their forky stings
And clap their brazen wings;

And as their scaly horrors rise,
They all at once disclose
A thousand fiery eyes
Which never know repose.

5 Air

Juno

Hence, Iris, hence away,
Far from the realms of day!
O'er Scythian hills to the Maeotian lake
A speedy flight we'll take!
There Somnus I'll compel
His downy bed to leave, and silent cell;
With noise and light I will his peace molest,
Nor shall he sink again to pleasing rest,
Till to my vow'd revenge he grants supplies,
And seals with sleep the wakeful dragons' eyes.
Hence. . . *da capo*

Exeunt

Scene 2

*An apartment in the palace of Semele.
She is sleeping, Loves and Zephyrs waiting.*

6 Air

Cupid

Come, Zephyrs, come, while Cupid sings,
Fan her with your silky wings!
New desire I'll inspire,
And revive the dying flames.
Dance around her
While I wound her,
And with pleasure

Fill her dreams.
Come, Zephyrs, come. . . *da capo*

Semele awakes and rises.

7 Air

Semele

O sleep, why dost thou leave me,
Why thy visionary joys remove?
O sleep, again deceive me,
To my arms restore my wand'ring love!

Scene 3

To them Enter Jupiter.

8 Recitative

Semele

Let me not another moment
Bear the pangs of absence;
Since you have form'd my soul for loving,
No more afflict me
With doubts and fears and cruel jealousy!

9 Air

Jupiter

Lay your doubts and fears aside,
And for joys alone provide.
Though this human form I wear,
Think not I man's falsehood bear.
Lay your doubts. . . *da capo*

10 Recitative

Jupiter

You are mortal and require
Time to rest and to repose.
I was not absent;
While Love was with thee,
I was present:
Love and I are one.

11 Air

Semele

With fond desiring,
With bliss expiring,
Panting,
Fainting,
If this be Love, not you alone,
But Love and I are one.
Causeless doubting,
Or despairing,
Rashly trusting,
Idly fearing,
If this be Love, not you alone,
But Love and I are one.
With fond. . . *da capo*

12 Chorus of Loves and Zephyrs

How engaging, how endearing,
Is a lover's pain and care!
And what joy the nymph's appearing
After absence or despair!
How engaging. . . *da capo*

13 Recitative

Semele

Ah me!

Jupiter

Why sighs my Semele?
What gentle sorrow
Swells thy soft bosom?
Why tremble those fair eyes
With interrupted light,
Where hov'ring for a vent,
Amidst their humid fires,
Some new-form'd wish appears?
Speak, and obtain!

Semele

At my own happiness
I sigh and tremble,
For I am mortal,
Still a woman;
And ever when you leave me,
Though compass'd round with deities
Of Loves and Graces,
A fear invades me;
And conscious of a nature
Far inferior,
I seek for solitude
And shun society.

Jupiter (apart)

Too well I read her meaning,
But must not understand her:
Aiming at immortality
With dangerous ambition.

14 Air

Jupiter

I must with speed amuse her,
Lest she too much explain.
It gives the lover double pain,
Who hears his nymph complain,
And hearing, must refuse her.
I must. . . *da capo*

15 Chorus of Loves and Zephyrs

Now Love that everlasting boy invites
To revel while you may in soft delights.

16 Recitative

Jupiter

By my command
Now at this instant
Two winged Zephyrs
From her downy bed
Thy much lov'd Ino bear,
And both together
Waft her hither,
Through the balmy air.

Semele

Shall I my sister see,
The dear companion
Of my tender years?

Jupiter

See, she appears,
But sees not me;
For I am visible
Alone to thee.

While I retire, rise and meet her,
And with welcomes greet her.
Now all this scene shall to Arcadia turn,
The seat of happy nymphs and swains;
There without the rage of jealousy they burn,
And taste the sweets of love without its pains.

17 Air

Jupiter

Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade;
Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade.
Where'er you tread, the blushing flow'rs shall rise,
And all things flourish where'er you turn your eyes.
Where'er. . . *da capo*

Exit.

Scene 4

Semele and Ino meet and embrace. Chorus of Nymphs and Swains.

18 Recitative

Semele

Dear sister, how was your passage hither?

Ino

O'er many states and peopled towns we pass'd,
O'er hills and valleys, and o'er deserts waste;
O'er barren moors, and o'er unwholesome fens,
And woods where beasts inhabit dreadful dens.
Through all which pathless way our speed was such,
We stopp'd not once the face of earth to touch.
Meantime they told me, while through air we fled,
That Jove did thus ordain.

19 Air

Ino

But hark! the heav'nly sphere turns round,
And silence now is drown'd
In ecstasy of sound.

How on a sudden the still air is charm'd
As if all harmony were just alarm'd!
And ev'ry soul with transport fill'd,
Alternately is thaw'd and chill'd.

20 Duet

Semele and Ino

Prepare then, ye immortal choir,
Each sacred minstrel tune his lyre,
And all in chorus join!

21 Chorus of Nymphs and Swains

Bless the glad earth with heav'nly lays,
And to that pitch th'eternal accents raise,
That all appear divine!



CD3 Act III

ACT THREE

Scene 1

The Cave of Sleep. The God of Sleep lying on his bed. A soft Symphony is heard afterwards. Juno and Iris appear.

1 Sinfonia

2 Accompagnato

Juno

Somnus, awake,
Raise thy reclining head!

Iris

Thyself forsake,
And lift up thy heavy lids of lead!

3 Air

Somnus (waking)

Leave me, loathsome light,
Receive me, silent night!
Lethe, why does thy ling'ring current cease?
Oh, murmur, murmur me again to peace!

Sleeps again.

4 Recitative

Iris

Dull God, canst thou attend the water's fall,
And not hear Saturnia call?

Juno

Peace, Iris, peace! I know how to charm him:
Pasithea's name alone can warm him.

(To Somnus)

Somnus, arise!
Disclose thy tender eyes;
For Pasithea's sight
Endure the light.
Somnus, arise!

5 Air

Somnus

More sweet is that name
Than a soft purling stream.
With pleasure repose I'll forsake,
If you'll grant me but her to soothe me awake.
More sweet. . . *da capo*

6 Recitative

Juno

My will obey,
She shall be thine.
Thou, with thy softer pow'rs,
First Jove shalt captivate.
To Morpheus then give order,
Thy various minister,
That with a dream in shape of Semele,
But far more beautiful And more alluring,
He may invade the sleeping deity;
And more to agitate his kindling fire
Still let the phantom seem to fly before him,
That he may wake impetuous, furious in desire,
Unable to refuse whatever boon
Her coyness shall require.

Somnus

I tremble to comply.

Juno

To me thy leaden rod resign,
To charm the sentinels
On mount Cithaeron,
Then cast a sleep on mortal Ino:
That I may seem her form to wear,
When I to Semele appear.

7 Duet

Juno

Obey my will, thy rod resign,
And Pasithea shall be thine.

Somnus

All I must grant, for all is due
To Pasithea, love and you.

Exeunt

Scene 2

An Apartment. Semele alone.

8 Air

Semele

My racking thoughts by no kind slumbers freed,
But painful nights to joyful days succeed.

Scene 3

To her Enter Juno as Ino, with a mirror in her hand.

9 Recitative

Juno (apart)

Thus shap'd like Ino,
With ease I shall deceive her,

And in this mirror she shall see
Herself as much transform'd as me.

(To Semele)

Do I some goddess see,
Or is it Semele!

Semele

Dear sister, speak,
Whence this astonishment?

Juno

Your charms improving
To divine perfection,
Show you were late admitted
Amongst celestial beauties.
Has Jove consented,
And are you made immortal?

Semele

Ah no! I still am mortal;
Nor am I sensible
Of any change or new perfection.

Juno gives Semele the mirror.

Juno

Behold in this mirror
Whence comes my surprise;
Such lustre and terror
Unite in your eyes,
That mine cannot fix on a radiance so bright,
'Tis unsafe for the sense and too slipp'ry for sight.

Semele
O, ecstasy of happiness!
Celestial graces
I discover in each feature!

10 Air

Semele
Myself I shall adore,
If I persist in gazing.
No object sure before
Was ever half so pleasing.
Myself. . . *da capo*

11 Recitative

Juno
Be wise, as you are beautiful,
Nor lose this opportunity.
When Jove appears,
All ardent with desire,
Refuse his proffer'd flame
Till you obtain a boon without a name.

Semele
Can that avail me?
But how shall I attain
To immortality?

Accompagnato

Juno
Conjure him by his oath
Not to approach your bed
In likeness of a mortal,
But like himself, the mighty thunderer,
In pomp of majesty

And heav'nly attire,
As when he proud Saturnia charms,
And with ineffable delights
Fills her encircling arms
And pays the nuptial rites.
You shall partake then of immortality,
And thenceforth leave this mortal state
To reign above,
Ador'd by Jove,
In spite of jealous Juno's hate.

12 Air

Semele
Thus let my thanks be paid,
Thus let my arms embrace thee,
And when I'm a goddess made,
With charms like mine I'll grace thee.

13 Recitative

Juno
Rich odours fill the fragrant air,
And Jove's approach declare.
I must retire.

Semele
Adieu, your counsel I'll pursue.

Juno (apart)
And sure destruction will ensue,
Vain wretched fool, adieu!

Exit.

Scene 4

Jupiter enters, offers to embrace Semele; she looks kindly on him, but retires a little from him.

14 Air

Jupiter

Come to my arms, my lovely fair,
Soothe my uneasy care.
In my dream late I woo'd thee,
And in vain I pursued thee,
For you fled from my prayer,
And bid me despair.
Come to my arms, my lovely fair.

15 Recitative

Jupiter

O Semele!
Why art thou thus insensible?

Air

Semele

I ever am granting,
You always complain.
I always am wanting,
Yet never obtain.
I ever am granting,
You always complain.

16 Recitative

Jupiter

Speak, speak your desire,
Say what you require,
I'll grant it –

Semele

Swear by the Stygian lake!

Accompagnato

Jupiter

By that tremendous flood, I swear;
Ye Stygian waters, hear,
And thou, Olympus, shake,
In witness to the oath I take!

Recitative

Semele

You'll grant what I require?

Jupiter

I'll grant what you require.

Thunder is heard at a distance and underneath.

Accompagnato

Semele

Then cast off this human shape which you wear,
And Jove since you are, like Jove too appear!

17 Air

Jupiter

Ah, take heed what you press,
For, beyond all redress,
Should I grant your request, I shall harm you.

18 Air

Semele

No, no, I'll take no less,
Than all in full excess!



Your oath it may alarm you.
Yet haste and prepare,
For I'll know what you are,
With all your powers arm you.
No, no. . . *da capo*

Exit.

Scene 5

19 **Accompagnato**

Jupiter (pensive and dejected)

Ah, whither is she gone, unhappy fair?
Why did she wish, why did I rashly swear?
'Tis past, 'tis past recall,
She must a victim fall.
Anon when I appear,
The mighty thunderer,
Arm'd with inevitable fire,
She needs must instantly expire.
'Tis past, 'tis past recall,
She must a victim fall.
My softest lightning yet I'll try,
And mildest melting bolt apply;
In vain – for she was fram'd to prove
None but the lambent flames of love.
'Tis past, 'tis past recall,
She must a victim fall.

Scene 6

Juno, alone.

20 **Air**

Juno

Above measure
Is the pleasure,
Which my revenge supplies.
Love's a bubble,
Gain'd with trouble,
And in possessing dies.
With what joy shall I mount to my heav'n again,
At once from my rival and jealousy freed!
The sweets of revenge make it worth while to reign,
And heav'n will hereafter be heav'n indeed.
Above measure. . . *da capo*

Scene 7

The scene discovers Semele under a canopy, leaning pensively, while a mournful symphony is playing. She looks up and sees Jupiter descending in a cloud; flashes of lightning issue from either side, and thunder is heard grumbling in the air.

21 **Accompagnato**

Semele

Ah me! Too late I now repent
My pride and impious vanity.
He comes! Far off his lightnings scorch me,
Ah! I feel my life consuming:
I burn, I burn, I faint, for pity I implore,
Oh help, oh help, I can no more!

She dies. The cloud bursts, and Semele with the palace instantly disappear.

Scene 8

Cadmus, Athamas, Ino and Chorus of Priests.

22 Chorus of Priests

O terror and astonishment!
Nature to each allots his proper sphere,
But that forsaken we like meteors err:
Toss'd through the void, by some rude shock
 we're broke,
And all our boasted fire is lost in smoke.

23 Recitative

Ino
How I was hence remov'd,
Or hither how return'd, I know not:
So long a trance withheld me.
But Hermes in a vision told me,
The fate of Semele;
And added, as from me he fled,
That Jove ordain'd I Athamas should wed.

Cadmus
Be Jove in ev'rything obey'd.

Joins their hands.

Athamas
Unworthy of your charms myself I yield,
Be Jove's commands and yours fulfill'd.

24 Air

Athamas
Despair no more shall wound me,
Since you so kind do prove.

All joy and bliss surround me,
My soul is tun'd to love.
Despair no more. . . *da capo*

25 Recitative

Cadmus
See from above the bellying clouds descend,
And big with some new wonder this way tend.

Scene 9

A bright cloud descends and rests upon Mount Cithaeron, which, opening, discovers Apollo seated in it as the God of Prophecy.

26 Sinfonia

27 Accompagnato

Apollo
Apollo comes, to relieve your care,
And future happiness declare.
From Semele's ashes a phoenix shall rise,
The joy of this earth, and delight of the skies:
A God he shall prove
More mighty than Love,
And sighing and sorrow for ever prevent.

28 Chorus

Happy, happy shall we be,
Free from care, from sorrow free;
Guiltless pleasures we'll enjoy,
Virtuous love will never cloy;
All that's good and just we'll prove,
And Bacchus crown the joys of love.

John Eliot Gardiner

Sir John Eliot Gardiner is revered as one of the world's most innovative and dynamic musicians and is a leader in the contemporary musical world. His work, as Founder and Artistic Director of the Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists (EBS) and Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique (ORR) has made him a key figure both in the early music revival and historically informed performance practice.

Gardiner is a regular guest of the world's leading symphony orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, conducting repertoire from the 16th to the 20th centuries. He has also conducted opera productions at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Wiener Staatsoper and the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. From 1983 to 1988 he was Artistic Director of the Opéra de Lyon, where he founded its new orchestra.

His broad repertoire is illustrated by his extensive catalogue of award-winning recordings with the Monteverdi ensembles and other leading orchestras on both major labels and his own Soli Deo Gloria label. He holds two GRAMMY awards and has received more Gramophone Awards than any other living artist.

Recent achievements with the Monteverdi ensembles include the RPS award winning Monteverdi 450 project, a reprise of the 2000's famous Bach Cantata Pilgrimage, which toured

to some of Europe's most famous concert halls and churches, a five-year exploration of Berlioz's major works to mark the 150th anniversary of the composer's death and a landmark performance of Verdi's Requiem at London's Westminster Cathedral in aid of Cancer Research UK. In 2019 Gardiner conducted new productions of Handel's *Semele* and Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*, and gave his debut performances in Colombia, Russia, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile.

An authority on the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Gardiner's book, *Music in the Castle of Heaven: A Portrait of Johann Sebastian Bach*, was published in October 2013 by Allen Lane, leading to the Prix des Muses award (Singer-Polignac). Among numerous awards in recognition of his work, Gardiner holds several honorary doctorates. He was awarded a knighthood for his services to music in the 1998 Queen's Birthday Honours List.



Louise Alder – soprano (Semele)

The winner in the Young Singer category of the 2017 International Opera Awards and recipient of the Dame Joan Sutherland Audience Prize at the 2017 Cardiff Singer of the World competition, Louise Alder studied at the University of Edinburgh and Royal College of Music.

From 2014 to 2019 she was a member of the solo ensemble at Oper Frankfurt, where her roles included Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*), Romilda (*Serse*), Susanna, Despina, Pamina, Gilda, Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), and the title role of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. She also appeared in the title role of *Calisto* at Teatro Real in Madrid, as Zerlina at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Gretel and Marzelline (*Fidelio*) at Bayerische Staatsoper, Ilia and Pamina at Garsington Opera, and Sophie at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Welsh National Opera. In concert she has notably performed the title role of *Theodora* at the BBC Proms with Arcangelo under Jonathan Cohen, and appeared with orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and Mahler Chamber Orchestra.

A passionate recitalist, she has given recitals at the Oxford Lieder Festival, BBC Proms, Leeds Lieder Festival, and the Wigmore Hall, London, Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Fundació Victoria de los Ángeles, Barcelona, Musikverein Graz, and Oper Frankfurt with artists such as Joseph Middleton, Gary Matthewman, James Baillieu, Helmut Deutsch,



and Roger Vignoles. The burgeoning discography of Louise Alder includes *Through Life and Love*, a programme of Strauss Songs with Joseph Middleton, *Chants d'amour* with James Baillieu, recorded live at Wigmore Hall, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Der Graf von Luxemburg* with Opera Frankfurt, and on DVD, *The Rape of Lucretia* with the Glyndebourne Festival.

Hugo Hymas – tenor (Jupiter)

Hugo Hymas's career has so far taken him far and wide to Europe, USA, Asia and Australia performing in some of the world's great venues: Philharmonie Paris, Concertgebouw, KKL Lucern, Royal Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall. He recently made his first trip to Australia performing tenor solos in Purcell's *King Arthur* with Gabrieli Consort (Paul McCreesh) and is looking forward to Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* in Sweden with Göteborgs Symfoniker (Andreas Spering), Handel's sacred oratorio *La Resurrezione* with Les Nouveaux Caractères (Sébastien d'Hérin) and a trip to Switzerland for Bach's B minor mass with Kammerorchester Basel (Winfried Toll).

Recent concert performances include a German tour of Purcell and Handel with Freiburg Baroque Orchestra (Kristian Bezuidenhout), Handel's *Messiah* in Helsinki with The English Concert (Harry Bicket), both Monteverdi's *Vespers* and Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with Dunedin Consort (John Butt), Bach's *St John Passion* with Marian Consort (Rory McCleery), Bach's B minor mass with Münchener Motettenchor (Benedikt Haag). Hugo has also performed the role of Uriel in Haydn's *Creation* with Les Arts Florissants (William Christie) in New York and on tour in France. He has also performed works from the French baroque at two of London's best chamber music venues: King's Place (with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and Wigmore Hall (with Early Opera Company – Christian Curnyn).



Recent opera roles include Septimius in *Theodora* for Potsdamer Winteroper, Jupiter in *Semele* with Shanghai Symphony Orchestra (Yu Long), and Indian Boy and Fame in *The Indian Queen* with Opera de Lille (Emmanuelle Haïm).

Lucile Richardot – mezzo-soprano (Juno/Ino)

Lucile Richardot started singing at the age of 11 in a children's choir in the East of France. She graduated in 2008 from the Maîtrise de Notre-Dame de Paris and in 2011 in Early Music from CRR de Paris. Lucile specialises in the field of early music as well as in contemporary repertoire, both on stage and in concerts, with Les Solistes XXI (conductor Rachid Safir), Correspondances (Sébastien Daucé), Ensemble Pygmalion (Raphaël Pichon), Le Poème Harmonique (Vincent Dumestre) and Les Arts Florissants (William Christie). She is also a highly sought-after oratorio soloist, and has worked with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Les Violons du Roy in Québec and Montréal. In 2009, she premiered the role of the first Aunt in the Philippe Boesmans' opera, *Yvonne, Princesse de Bourgogne*, at the Paris Opera and the Theater an der Wien.

In 2017 Lucile sang Lisea in Vivaldi's *Arsilda* with Collegium 1704 (Vaclav Luks), and the roles of Penelope, Messaggera and Arnalta in Monteverdi's three surviving operas, as part of the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestras 450th anniversary celebrations of the composer. Alongside these projects, Lucile also recorded her first solo album with Ensemble Correspondances, *Perpetual Night*, a collection of 17th-century English consort songs.

2018 saw her sing the role of Goffredo in Handel's *Rinaldo* with Bertrand Cuiller's



Caravansérail, and her début at Aix-en-Provence Festival as the Sorceress and Spirit in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. She also performed Berlioz concerts with John Eliot Gardiner and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, which included performances at New York's Carnegie Hall and Paris's Philharmonie.

Carlo Vistoli – countertenor (Athamas)

Carlo Vistoli began his vocal training as a countertenor with William Matteuzzi and Sonia Prina in 2007. He studied at the Frescobaldi Conservatory in Ferrara and at the University of Bologna and made his professional stage debut in 2012 as the Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*) in Cesena and Ravenna.

Highlights of his career since then have included Licida in Mysliveček's *L'Olimpiade* in Bologna, the title role in Händel's *Tamerlano*, Tolomeo (*Giulio Cesare in Egitto*) in Shanghai, a world tour as a member of William Christie's academy *Le Jardin des Voix*, the world premiere of Adriano Guarnier's video opera *L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*, Febo in Caldara's *Dafne* in Venice, *Dido and Aeneas* at the Teatro Regio di Torino, Ottone in Händel's *Agrippina* in Brisbane (an interpretation for which he won a Helpmann Award), a European tour of *Messiah* under Christie, and *L'umana Fragilità (Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria)* and Ottone (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) as part of the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra's Monteverdi 450 project. Also in 2017 he toured Europe performing Monteverdi's *Selva morale* with Christie and Les Arts Florissants, and sang Idraspe in Cavalli's *Erismena* at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.

Highlights of 2018 included Ruggiero (Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso*) under Diego Fasolis in Venice and a new production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in Salzburg under William Christie, again as Ottone.



In 2019 he sang Ulisse in Sacconi's *La finta pazza* in Dijon and the title role in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. He was also *L'ospite* in a new production by Teatro La Fenice in Venice of Sciarrino's *Luci mie traditrici*. Future engagements include the title role in Vivaldi's *Farnace* in Venice, Goffredo in Händel's *Rinaldo* for Pinchgut Opera in Sydney and Ottone in Händel's *Agrippina* in Teatro alla Scala di Milano.

Gianluca Buratto – bass (Cadmus/ Somnus)

One of the major talents to come out of Italy recently, bass Gianluca Buratto made his debut at the Teatro Verdi in Trieste, in the world premiere of Solbiati's *Il Carro e I Cantì*. His past engagements include Mercadante's *Virginia* and *La bohème* at the Wexford Opera Festival, Mozart's *La Betulia liberata* at the Salzburg Festival under Riccardo Muti, *Le nozze di Figaro* with Christophe Rousset in Barcelona, *La bohème* under Riccardo Chailly and *I Due Foscari* in Valencia, *I Puritani* (Giorgio) at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and *Die Zauberflöte* in Liège under Paolo Arrivabeni. Gianluca recently performed in his first solo recital at the Wigmore Hall in London and in Faccio's *Amleto* and *Turandot* at the Bregenzer Festspiele. Gianluca took part in the 2017 Monteverdi Trilogy Project with John Eliot Gardiner, the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque soloists as Seneca, Antinoo and Plutone, on a worldwide tour celebrating the composer's 450th anniversary.

His discography includes Puccini's *La bohème* with Riccardo Chailly (Unitel); Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (Naïve); Rossi's *Oratorio della Settimana Santa* (MV Cremona); Lieder by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (Winter and Winter); Cavalli's *Missa pro defunctis* (Tactus); Bassani's *La tromba della divina misericordia* (Concerto) and Rota's *Mysterium* (Decca).



Emily Owen – soprano (Iris)

Having graduated from Durham University with a First Class Honours degree in Music, Emily Owen went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, completing an Extended Artist Masters with Distinction in 2016 and becoming a GSMD Ensemble Artist Fellow with early music ensemble Ceruleo in 2017/18. She currently studies with Tim Evans-Jones.

Emily leads a varied freelance career as a consort singer and soloist, performing regularly with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras, Dame Emma Kirkby's Dowland Works, Apollo5 *a cappella* group and Britten Sinfonia Voices, and is a regular soprano at St Bride's Church Fleet Street and the West London Synagogue.

She is a founder member of Ceruleo, a Baroque ensemble who are currently touring an Arts Council England-funded show about the life of Henry Purcell which appeared at Brighton Early Music Festival, York Early Music Christmas Festival and Ryedale Festival in 2019.

She performs for Live Music Now, taking baroque music into alternative social settings and as a passionate educator, she leads workshops with Apollo5 and the VCM Foundation in their outreach work across Europe and is a choral practitioner for the Voices Foundation. She teaches singing at Harrow School.



Photo courtesy of the Artist

Monteverdi Choir

Ever since its founding in the 1960s, the Monteverdi Choir has been a leading force in the world of choral music. Through a combination of consummate technique, historically informed performance practice and a strong appreciation for visual impact, the Choir constantly strives to bring fresh perspectives, immediacy and drama to its performances across the world. Amongst its many trailblazing tours was the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000, during which the Choir performed all 198 of Johann Sebastian Bach's sacred cantatas in over 60 churches throughout Europe and North America. The entire project was recorded and released by the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestras' record label, Soli Deo Gloria, with *Gramophone* hailing the venture as 'one of the most ambitious musical projects of all time'. The Monteverdi Choir has over 150 recordings to its name and has won numerous prizes.

The Choir has taken part in a variety of projects across different repertoires, ranging from a tour of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (performed from memory) with the English Baroque Soloists (EBS) to Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust* and Verdi's Requiem with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique (ORR). It has also performed in several staged opera productions, including *Orphée et Eurydice* at the Royal Opera House (2015), *Der Freischütz* (2010), *Carmen* (2009) at the Opéra Comique in Paris, and *Les Troyens* at the Théâtre du Châtelet (2003). In 2017 the Choir took part in



the RPS award-winning Monteverdi 450 project, which saw them perform all three of Monteverdi's surviving operas with Gardiner and the EBS across Europe and the United States.

In 2019, the Choir showcased a new production of Handel's *Semele* alongside Gardiner and the EBS, touring to celebrated halls across Europe, including Milan's Teatro alla Scala. The highlights continued into the summer as the Choir joined Gardiner, the ORR and an international cast of soloists for critically acclaimed performances of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*. The Choir rounded off the year with a series of debut performances in Russia and South America, performing sacred choral works by Monteverdi, Carissimi, Purcell and Scarlatti.

Sopranos

Penelope Appleyard
Emily Armour
Sam Cobb*
Rebecca Hardwick
Angela Hicks
Eloise Irving
Laura Jarrell*
Charlotte La Thrope*
Victoria Meteyard*
Eleanor Meynell
Emily Owen
Alison Ponsford-Hill
Rebecca Ramsey
Angharad Rowlands

Altos

Francesca Biliotti
Heather Cairncross
Rosie Clifford
Sarah Denbee
Hamish McLaren
Simon Ponsford
Margarita Slepakova*
Matthew Venner
Richard Wilberforce

Tenors

Ben Alden
Mark Bonney
John Bowen
Peter Davoren
Jonathan Hanley*
Edmund Hastings
Graham Neal
Benedict Quirke
Gareth Treseder

Basses

James Birchall
Robert Davies
Dan D'Souza
Sam Evans
Michael Lafferty*
Alistair Ollerenshaw
James Quilligan*
David Stuart
Lawrence Wallington
Christopher Webb

English Baroque Soloists

Founded in 1978 by John Eliot Gardiner, the English Baroque Soloists seek to challenge preconceptions of 200 years of music ranging from Monteverdi to Mozart and Haydn. Equally at home in chamber, symphonic and operatic performances, their distinctively warm and incisive playing is instantly recognisable. One of the world's leading period instrument orchestras, the ensemble has performed at many of the world's most prestigious venues including the Milan's Teatro alla Scala, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Sydney Opera House. 2017 saw the EBS take part in the celebrated Monteverdi 450 tour, in which they performed all three of Monteverdi's surviving operas across Europe and in the USA, a project that was recognised by a Royal Philharmonic Society award in the Opera and Music Theatre category.

In 2018, the EBS performed in Salzburg's annual Mozartwoche, reprising the landmark Bach Cantata Pilgrimage alongside the Monteverdi Choir in some of Europe's most famous concert halls and churches, culminating in a residency at London's Barbican Hall.

The EBS began 2019 with its inaugural visit to South America for the Cartagena International Music Festival, and subsequently undertook a tour of Handel's dramatic oratorio *Semele* with the Monteverdi Choir, visiting a series of iconic venues including the Philharmonie in Paris; Barcelona's Palau de la Música; the Alexandra Palace Theatre in London; Milan's Teatro alla Scala;



and Sala Santa Cecilia in Rome. The ensemble then gave its debut performances in Russia alongside the Monteverdi Choir with a programme of works by Monteverdi, Carissimi, Scarlatti and Purcell, before returning to South America for further inaugural concerts in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile.

The EBS regularly performs with the Monteverdi Choir, with whom they famously took part in the iconic Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000, performing all of Bach's sacred cantatas throughout Europe. The ensemble has also participated in major opera productions alongside the Choir in works by Handel, Purcell and Monteverdi, and recorded Mozart's greatest operas for Deutsche Grammophon in the 1990s. More recently they toured Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* to Hamburg and Versailles, following a staged production at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in collaboration with the Hofesh Shechter Company.

Violins I

Kati Debretzeni
Iona Davies
Jane Gordon
Rebecca Livermore
Susan Carpenter Jacobs
Dominika Fehér
Sarah Moffatt
Davina Clarke

Violins II

Anne Schumann
Oliver Webber
Roy Mowatt
Beatrice Scaldini
Håkan Wikström
Hildburg Williams
Kinga Ujszaszi

Violas

Fanny Paccoud
Monika Grimm
Lisa Cochrane
Aliye Cornish

Cellos

Marco Frezzato
Catherine Rimer
Ruth Alford
Kinga Gáborjáni

Double Basses

Valerie Botwright
Markus van Horn

Oboes

Rachel Chaplin
Mark Baigent

Bassoons

Veit Scholz
Katrin Lazar

Horns

Anneke Scott
Joseph Walters
Gavin Edwards

Trumpets

Robert Vanryne
Michael Harrison

Timpani

Robert Kendell

Theorbo

Evangelina Mascardi

Harp

Gwyneth Wentink

Harpsichord/Organ

James Johnstone
Paolo Zanzu



Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome © Musacchio, Ianniello & Pasqualini

Recorded live on 2 May and
also 3–4 May 2019 at Alexandra
Palace Theatre, London

Sound Engineer:

Mike Hatch

Executive Producer:

Steve Long

Music Producer and Editor:

Jörn Pedersen

Score and parts published by:

Bärenreiter Verlag, Kassel

Design:

Marshall Light Studio

Programme Note and Synopsis:

David Vickers

Programme note translations:

Dennis Collins (French), Gerhard

Gall (German)

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Level 12

20 Bank Street

London

E14 4AD

Cover image:

Renata Apanaviciene

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Soli Deo Gloria



Choir & Orchestras

George Frideric Handel
1685-1759

Semele

CD 1	39:07	Act I
CD 2	50:55	Act II
CD 3	65:47	Act III

Semele
Jupiter
Juno / Ino
Athamas
Cadmus / Somnus
Iris
Cupid
Apollo
Augur
High Priest

Louise Alder
Hugo Hymas
Lucile Richardot
Carlo Vistoli
Gianluca Buratto
Emily Owen
Angela Hicks
Peter Davoren
Angharad Rowlands
Dan D'Souza

Monteverdi Choir
English Baroque Soloists
John Eliot Gardiner


Soli Deo Gloria


Choir & Orchestras

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