THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA

Music by Benjamin Britten
Libretto by Ronald Duncan

Conductor
Emily Senturia

Stage Director
kt shorb

Scenic Design
Stephen Wiseley

Producer
Brandon McShaffrey

Costume Design
Rebecca Kanach

Intimacy Director
Colleen Hughes

Lighting Design
Jason Norris

Fight Director
Ian Rose

Friday, October 27, 2023 • 7:30 PM
Sunday, October 29, 2023 • 3:00 PM
Tuesday, October 31, 2023 • 7:30 PM

Tomlinson Theater | 1301 W. Norris St. | Philadelphia, PA 19122

The Rape of Lucretia by Benjamin Britten presented under license from Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited

Run time: approx. 2 hours, including a 15 minute intermission

This production is sponsored in part by The Temple University General Activities Fund.

Forty-third, forty-sixth, and forty-seventh performances of the 2023-2024 season.
Cast

(in order of vocal appearance)

Male Chorus.................................................................Nikolas James
Female Chorus............................................................Kaitlyn Gaughan
Collatinus.................................................................Timothy Hurtt
Junius.................................................................Chase Côté
Tarquinius.................................................................Adam Rodgers
Lucretia.................................................................McKenna Brunson
Bianca.................................................................Andreia Lucaciu
Lucia.................................................................Nalani Matthias

Covers/Ensemble

Junius.................................................................Daniel Laverriere
Tarquinius.................................................................John Drake
Bianca.................................................................Ali Crosley
Lucia.................................................................서원영 (Wonyoung Seo)
Ensemble.................................................................Benjamin Chen
Music Staff
Christopher Turbessi (Principal Coach)
Маргарита Шатилова (Margarita Shatilova) (Coach)
Andrew Samlal (Coach)

Orchestra

VIOLIN I
Таисия Лосмакова
(Taisiya Losmakova)

VIOLIN II
Katherine Lebedev

VIOLA
Shannon Merlino

CELLO
Samuel Divirgilio

BASS
మహాన్ బెలామ్కండా
(Mohan Bellamkonda)

FLUTE/PICCOLO/ALTO FLUTE
Samantha Humen

OBOE/ENGLISH HORN
Kay Meyer

CLARINET/BASS CLARINET
覃天
(Tian Qin)

BASSOON
Diego Peña

HORN
Jonathan Bywater

HARP
Daniel Benedict

PERCUSSION
Milo Paperman

PIANO
Маргарита Шатилова
(Margarita Shatilova)
Land Acknowledgement

“The land upon which we gather is part of the traditional territory of the Lenni-Lenape, called “Lenapehoking.” The Lenape People lived in harmony with one another upon this territory for thousands of years. During the colonial era and early federal period, many were removed west and north, but some also remain among the continuing historical tribal communities of the region. We acknowledge the Lenni-Lenape as the original people of this land and their continuing relationship with their territory. In our acknowledgment of the continued presence of Lenape people in their homeland, we affirm the aspiration of the great Lenape Chief Tamanend, that there be harmony between the indigenous people of this land and the descendants of the immigrants to this land, “as long as the rivers and creeks flow, and the sun, moon, and stars shine.”

Content Warning

Content Notice: depiction of violent sexual assault, gender-based violence, death by suicide, and misogyny

The exits of the theatre are marked with illuminated exit signs. Aisles and doors will remain lit and accessible throughout the performance. There are gender-inclusive restrooms located in Klein Hall. Water fountains are located in the theater lobby.

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Synopsis

Prologue
The Male and Female Choruses explain the situation in Rome: ruled by the foreigner Tarquinius Superbus and fighting off a Greek invasion, the city has sunk into depravity. The two choruses describe their own role as Christian interpreters of the pagan story about to begin. Throughout the opera the Male Chorus will narrate the thoughts of the male characters, and the Female Chorus those of the female characters.

Act I, Scene I - The Army Camp
In an armed camp outside Rome, Tarquinius, Collatinus and Junius are drinking together. The previous night, a group of soldiers rode unexpectedly home to Rome to check on their wives, all of whom were caught betraying their husbands, with the single exception of Collatinus's wife Lucretia. Junius, whose wife, Patricia, was among the faithless majority, goads young Tarquinius, the king's son, into testing Lucretia's chastity himself. The impulsive prince calls for his horse and gallops off to the city alone.

Act I, Scene II - The Hall of Lucretia's Home
At Collatinus's house in Rome, Lucretia is patiently crocheting and tending to household chores with her servants, Bianca and Lucia. She longs for her absent husband. As the women prepare for bed, there is a knock at the door: Tarquinius. Though fearful, they cannot refuse to offer the prince hospitality.

Intermission

Act II, Scene I - Lucretia’s Bedroom
As Lucretia sleeps, Tarquinius creeps into her bedroom and awakens her with a kiss. She begs him to go, but certain that she desires him, he forces himself on her.

Act II, Scene II - The Hall of Lucretia's Home
The following morning, Lucia and Bianca are glad to discover that Tarquinius has already left the house. Lucretia enters, calm but obviously devastated. She sends a messenger asking Collatinus to come home. Bianca tries to stop the messenger, but Collatinus arrives at once (accompanied by Junius). He comforts his wife lovingly, but she feels that she will never be clean again. She stabs herself and dies. All mourn. Junius plans to use this crime by the prince to spark a rebellion against the king.

The Female Chorus is left in despair at the moral emptiness of this story. But the Male Chorus tells her that all pain is given meaning, and all sin redeemed, in the suffering of Christ. While the Male Chorus sings of how this story deepens his devotion, Female Chorus doubts whether what she has been taught can actually lead to salvation.
Director’s Note

As a director, I’ve always been attracted to “problematic texts,” pieces that somehow create cognitive dissonance with contemporary audiences and can contain material that enact harm on people historically silenced. Perhaps because I am a queer, non-binary, Asian American Buddhist, I am motivated by the challenge of finding liberation in contexts that on surface feel like they oppress me.

When asked to direct Lucretia, I felt it would be a particularly arresting challenge. This mid-20th century version of a classical story—written by a gay Briton in the wake of World War II—about power, gendered violence, and collective shame felt oddly (queerly?) resonant to our era of #metoo and post-Roe v. Wade. Lucretia’s impossible choice between living a life of heartbreak, fear, and shame versus “virtuous” death is not one we can relegate to the past. It is unfortunately one women still make today. Folding that into Britten’s glorious and evocative sound created a purposeful tension.

Upon learning the casting, I also needed to avoid reenforcing racial stereotypes while also furthering the pedagogical needs and growth of the remarkable and earnest cast. So-called “color-blind casting” is the industry norm that has led to more opportunities for singers of color and wider representation onstage. Yet, people’s bodies make meaning. I see the culture in opera shifting to examine both truths with more nuance. Therefore, as the director also charged with teaching singers-in-training, my questions were clear. How do we honor this nuanced conversation and also foster expansion of repertory and opportunity? How do we train emerging opera talent so opera of tomorrow will look more like our society than it does today? Engaging with problematic texts requires actively reducing harm. It also carries risk. I can only hope I’ve provided the care that furthers our path toward these larger shifts in opera and society.

As a director, it is never my job to tell performers or audiences what to think, instead, I create an environment where performers can bring their bravest selves toward asking uncomfortable questions in collaboration with the audience. We live in times where the performing arts not only work under siege, but are perhaps more vital than ever toward fostering empathy and dialogue. Female Chorus asks, “is all this suffering and pain, is this in vain?” The doubt she expresses is fertile ground on which we ask ourselves, how can we end suffering and pain? How are we all accountable to one another? I do not hold the answers, but I hope what we leave onstage sows seeds that grow toward finding what we need.

kt shorb
Stage Director

Musicologist Note

Benjamin Britten and Ronald Duncan’s chamber opera The Rape of Lucretia premiered in 1946, in the aftermath of war. A lifelong pacifist, Britten had spent the
war as a conscientious objector. Though he hesitated to read his own work biographically, the opera's story notably takes place in the aftermath of another war, in which Etruscans occupy Rome. Lucretia becomes another spoil of war.

Lucretia premiered only a year after the sensational success of Britten’s opera Peter Grimes, but while Grimes premiered at London’s Sadler’s Wells, Lucretia was intended for the smaller country house festival of Glyndebourne, located near England’s southern coast. It would turn out to be only the first of many chamber operas for Britten, who found that the intimacy of a small orchestra (in this opera, twelve musicians) allowed for subtle, pointillistic detail and, more practically, that the lesser resources required could make these operas fit for tours to small towns unable to host a Grimes or a Bohème.

Librettist Ronald Duncan’s immediate source was a French play from the 1930s of the same title by André Obey, itself drawn from Shakespeare’s The Rape of Lucrece and Latin works by Ovid and Livy. Filtered through these multiple adaptations and transformations, Duncan and Britten elevated a historical fragment to the realm of the myth. For them, the story was less about a tragedy that befell one woman than, in Duncan’s words, “the dramatization of the conflict between the Individual and Society... the individual is personified by Lucretia, whose virtuous personality is persecuted, raped, by Tarquinius, who symbolizes Society.”

The audience’s guides are two narrator figures, named in classical Greek fashion the Male and Female Chorus, who establish not only the settings but also frame the story as an explicitly Christian story of sacrifice and redemption. Yet, as pointed out by the musicologist Philip Brett, Lucretia is forced into the role of both sinner and sacrifice. She has internalized her own oppression, referring to herself in the third person (“Lucretia’s shame”). At the same time, Britten, a gay man in an era when homosexuality was still illegal, had a lifelong preoccupation with those cast out from society. While Duncan later wrote that he saw himself in Tarquinius, Britten’s attentions were more focused on the conflicted Lucretia, rendered extraordinary for a sexuality that was seen as transgressive.

Musically, Lucretia is notable for Britten’s use of recitative with only piano accompaniment, a retro approach recalling Mozart. It allows the singers to declaim Duncan’s undeniably wordy text with clarity, while more expressive moments move into lyrical arioso. Both modes are suffused with Britten’s characteristic attention to the rhythms of the English text. The music frequently represents the meaning of the text—listen for the thumping of the Romans’ feet and the sounds of frogs and crickets at the beginning of the opera. Yet the opera is also notable for what it doesn’t represent: Britten never wrote his originally planned threnody, a cathartic ending in which Lucretia’s death would take on a socially redemptive quality. Instead, we are left with the two Choruses asking: “Is this all?” Their Christian framework is an ultimately passive one, and we should perhaps instead leave the last word to Lucretia herself, who makes her confession and trauma defiantly public: “What I have spoken never can be forgotten.”

Dr. Micaela Baranello
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Mitten Hall, 3rd Floor Auditorium
1913 N Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122

For further information or to confirm events, please call 215.204.7609 or visit boyer.temple.edu.

Conductor: José Luis Domínguez
Stage Director: Brandon McShaffrey
Biographies

Drawing from her diverse experience as a violinist, conductor, and coach, Emily Senturia (conductor) approaches operatic repertoire with a sympathetic affinity for both singers and instrumentalists. In 2023, Ms. Senturia debuts at The Glimmerglass Festival (Rinaldo) and The Atlanta Opera (L’amant anonyme); recently, she has conducted at Minnesota Opera (Rinaldo), Florida Grand Opera (Fellow Travelers), and New Orleans Opera (Il barbiere di Siviglia). She music directed the world premiere of Denis & Katya at Opera Philadelphia’s O19 Festival, and has been on the music staff at Houston Grand Opera (Nixon in China, Tosca, Faust, Aida), the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (Le nozze di Figaro), Wolf Trap Opera (The Ghosts of Versailles, Giulio Cesare, La bohème), and Opera Philadelphia (Sky on Swings, Elizabeth Cree, War Stories). Ms. Senturia is an alum of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, Wolf Trap, the Aspen Music Festival, and the Royal Academy of Music. She studied orchestral conducting at Boston University and violin at Rice University.

kt shorb (director) is a director, actor, and scholar. They are an assistant professor in the theater and dance department at Macalester College. Directorial credits include: an upcoming performance of Ottone in Villa, L’incoronazione di Poppea, She Kills Monsters, black girl love: an adaptation project, and The Mikado: Reclaimed. kt is currently the vice president for the Consortium of Asian American Theaters & Artists, and through 2024, they are a Social Science Research Council Arts Research with Communities of Color fellow, working with the Saint Paul-based Asian American company, Theater Mu. They hold a PhD in Performance as Public Practice from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Bachelor of Music in Composition from Oberlin Conservatory.

Christopher Turbessi (principal coach) is the Opera Coach at the Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University; he has also been on the faculty of the Collaborative Piano Institute since its inaugural summer in 2017. He irregularly materializes on the music staff of the Wolf Trap Opera Company, most recently as Principal Coach and Continuo for their 2023 production of Don Giovanni. Past adventures have included a Lecturer appointment at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University; a 2022 recital with baritone Reginald Smith Jr. as part of the San Diego Opera Gala; stints as music staff at Utah Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, and the Castleton Festival; Music Director for productions with the Santa Fe Opera Tour and the Opera Institute at Augusta University; Assistant Conductor at Virginia Opera; and Chorus Master at Virginia Opera and Syracuse Opera. Previously an Assistant Conductor and the Musical Supervisor of HGOco at Houston Grand Opera, he oversaw the musical efforts of that department, including the workshops and world premiere performances of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players, Gregory Spears’ O Columbia, and David Hanlon’s After the Storm. He is a graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, as well as young artist programs at Virginia Opera, the Aspen Opera Theater Center, and Syracuse Opera. He holds a master of music degree in collaborative piano from the University of Michigan, where he studied with Martin Katz.
Brandon McShaffrey (producer) has been teaching at Temple University since 2009 where he is currently the Head of Opera Production at Temple University. With TU Opera Theater he has directed Dark Sisters (Muhly), Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart), Turn of the Screw (Britten), L’elisir d’amore (Donizetti), Il Ritorno d’ulisse in patria (Monteverdi), Der schauspieldirektor (Mozart), La Canterina (Hadyn), Trouble in Tahiti (Bernstein), Dido and Aeneas (Purcell), The Merry Widow (Lehar), and Hansel und Gretel (Humperdink) and has directed and choreographed many plays and musicals in the theater department. He runs both graduate and Undergraduate Opera workshops and produces the annual Aria/Scenes programs. Professionally he has directed over 20 productions at Maples Repertory Theater. He is an active member and on the board of directors of the National Opera Association and is a founding member and Producing Director of Mauckingbird Theater Company.
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Brandon McShaffrey, Director of Opera Production
Christine Anderson, Voice and Opera Area Coordinator
Leslie Cochran, Coordinator, Department of Vocal Arts

Department of Vocal Arts
Voice and Opera
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Nalani Matthias, Nicholas Orth, Roslyn Rich

Teaching Assistant..........................................................Adam Rodgers

Department of Theater
Graduate Assistants

Academic Interns..........................................................Madelyne Connors,
Dinorah Guillen, Kit Longo, Mike Merluzzi, Liam Shaffer,
Cory Steige, April Thomson, Becky Wetzel
Additional Staff for this Production

Conductor ................................................................. Emily Senturia
Stage Director ............................................................... kt shorb
Scenic Designer ............................................................. Stephen Wiseley
Costume Designer .......................................................... Rebecca Kanach
Lighting Designer ............................................................. Jason Norris
Fight Director ................................................................. Ian Rose
Intimacy Director ............................................................ Colleen Hughes
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Assistant Stage Managers ................................................ Aurora Quintero, A.J. Decker
Music Preparation .......................................................... Christopher Turbessi, Margarita Shatilova, Andrew Samlal
Assistant Director ............................................................. Sarah Petko
Assistant Fight Director .................................................... Ilana Lo
Fight Captain ................................................................. Alexa Pennington
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Assistant Head Carpenter .................................................. Alexis Winner
Scenic Construction and Painters ....................................... Mickey B, Chazzlyn Burke Hayley Burnside, Aniya Calloway, Khyla Corbin, Alex Fine, Arianna Kudner, Jack Mandish, Nalani Matthias, Mike Merluzzi, Sarah Petko, Joy Robinson, Cory Steiger, April Thomson, Marya Wallace, Olivia Yeomans
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