

Johann Adolph Scheibe (1708–1776):

# ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

SchW B2:404

libretto: Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg (1737–1823)

# PROKRIS UND CEPHALUS

SchW B2:432

libretto: Johann Elias Schlegel (1719–1749)

---

ARIADNE

Ruut Eleonoora Karhula

OREAD & PROCRIS

Irina Nuutinen

CEPHALUS

Niilo Erkkilä

NARRATOR

Fanny Henn

Kristiina Hirvonen, Baroque cello

Jasper Koekoek, harpsichord

---

The cantatas *Ariadne auf Naxos* (SchW B2:404) and *Prokris und Cephalus* (SchW B2:432), based on ancient mythology, are presumably the most extensive cantatas in history composed for voice(s) and obligato harpsichord. They were published together under the name *Tragische Kantaten* in 1765 in Copenhagen and Leipzig. The publication also includes an extensive and varied preface.

Their composer, Johann Adolph Scheibe (1708–76), was a German-born musician-composer as well as a music theorist and critic, who served as Capellmeister of the Danish court from 1740 to 1748 and afterward as a freelancer. Even after his time as Kapellmeister, his compositions mainly consisted of commissioned works for the Danish court. Scheibe was an active writer. He wrote works on music theory, aesthetics, and composition, and he also worked as a critic at a time when art criticism, as the concept we know today, was still at a very early stage. Scheibe is nowadays often quoted due to his writings on musical rhetoric.

He also translated a vast amount of literature—he spoke and wrote fluently in both German and Danish, which was not a given for German-language Danes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Copenhagen had a large German-speaking minority, and the artists and writers belonging to this group had a great deal of influence on the artistic ideals throughout Northern Europe. Scheibe's translation output is said to encompass over 4,000 pages. He had a wide network and was respected in both Denmark and his homeland of Saxony, and his journal *Der critische Musicus* was immensely popular among scholars and musicians—and gossipmongers—alike.

Scheibe composed a vast amount of music. He wrote especially works for large ensembles for various (and numerous) court ceremonies. He was keenly interested in the human voice and its means of expression. In Leipzig 1764–65, he published a three-part essay series, *Abhandlung über das Recitativ*, in which he discussed just about everything related to recitatives such as prosody, instrumentation, vocal ranges, ornamentation (mainly how to reduce it), and more. He also develops an interesting taxonomic system for different types of recitatives. However, the main focus is on the

dichotomy between what he calls *recitation* and *declamation*, to which he dedicates the majority of the essay trilogy.

Scheibe's music stylistically falls between the Baroque and Classical periods. The cantatas heard today feature many different styles, some of which look back to the style of Telemann or Bach, while others are in *Empfindsamkeit* style; and some, particularly Ariadne's recitatives, have a strong spirit of *Sturm und Drang*.

---

The story of **Ariadne** has fascinated composers, visual artists, and writers for centuries. Ariadne has just helped her beloved Theseus save his life from the clutches of the Minotaur with the help of her ball of thread, and the lovers escape together to the island of Naxos. Upon arrival, at the break of dawn, she wakes up without Theseus by her side. As she calls for her companion, an oread—a mountain nymph—appears to Ariadne and tells her of the events of the night: Theseus has continued his journey and left her to her own fate. What will become of her?

The tale of **Procris and Cephalus** is a tragic story about the deadly consequences of jealousy. Cephalus's frequent hunting trips stir suspicion in Procris, making her doubt his loyalty. Determined to uncover the truth, she sneaks out to spy on him. From her hiding place, she overhears Cephalus singing tenderly to someone else. Suddenly, some rustling in the bushes catches Cephalus's attention and, believing it to be caused by a wild animal, he fires an arrow. What will become of them?

---

### **ARIADNE: Ruut Eleonoora Karhula**

Mezzo-soprano Ruut Eleonoora Karhula has captivated audiences in recent years in many Baroque opera roles, including the title role in Claudio Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*, Dido in Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and in Purcell's *King Arthur*. She has also appeared as an alto soloist in works like Handel's *Messiah*, and in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Finnish Baroque Orchestra.

### **OREAD & PROCRIIS: Irina Nuutinen**

Mezzo-soprano Irina Nuutinen has performed as a soloist at e.g. the Savonlinna Opera Festival and the Tampere Opera; and with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Helsinki Festival. She is known for her rich tone and compelling stage presence. She has a deep passion for Lied and is a regular performer of art song.

### **NARRATOR: Fanny Henn**

Mezzo-soprano Fanny Henn has performed as an alto soloist with the Finnish Baroque Orchestra and the Helsinki Metropolitan Orchestra in oratorios such as Messiah and Elijah. She has also performed in theatre productions at the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, Åbo Svenska Teater, and Oulu City Theatre. In 2023, she was chosen as soloist for the Päivi and Paavo Lipponen Foundation. Henn completed her opera studies at the Sibelius Academy in spring 2024, studying under Monica Groop.

### **CEPHALUS: Niilo Erkkilä**

Tenor Niilo Erkkilä is known for his significant interpretations of German sacred works, particularly those of Johann Sebastian Bach. He has taken on key solo roles, including the Evangelist in the St. Matthew Passion and the St. John Passion, in addition to roles in the Christmas Oratorio.

### **Kristiina Hirvonen, Baroque Cello**

Kristiina Hirvonen is a prominent Baroque cellist and gamba player, frequently performing as a chamber and orchestral musician, especially in the Helsinki area. She studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur in Paris; and at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki under Markku Luolajan-Mikkola.

### **Jasper Koekoek, Harpsichord**

Harpsichordist Jasper Koekoek has performed a lot as a continuo player in chamber ensembles, orchestras, and opera productions. As a solo harpsichordist, he is particularly interested in advocating Dutch and Nordic Baroque music.