



WHO?

Composer:
Gioachino Rossini
(1792 – 1868)

Librettist: Gaetano Rossi
(1774 – 1855)

WHAT?

Heroic *opera seria*
(Noble subject matter +
clear structure of arias,
recitatives, and ensembles)

WHEN?

Premiered on
February 6, 1813

WHERE?

First performance at
Teatro La Fenice in Venice,
Italy

Did you know?

A “pants role” or “trouser role” is a male character meant by the composer to be played by a woman. In opera, usually this character is a young man or adolescent boy.

Besides Tancredi and Roggiero in this opera, other famous examples of ‘pants roles’ include Cherubino in Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* or even the title role in the musical *Peter Pan*!

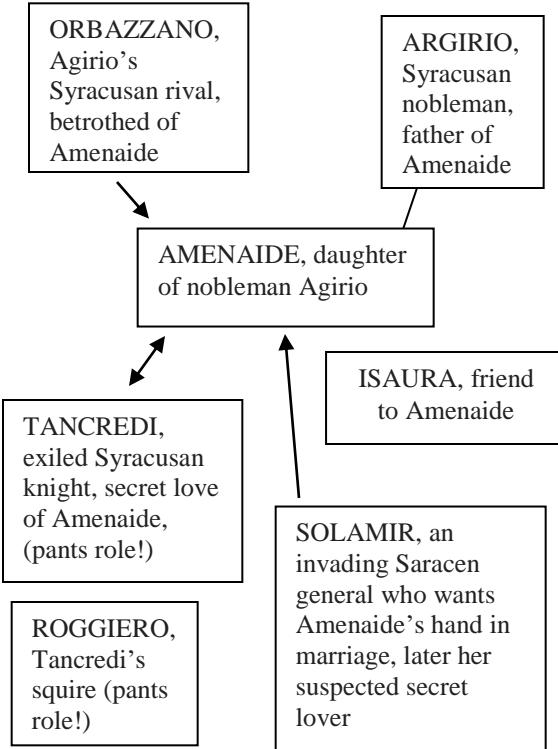
Baltimore Concert Opera presents: Rossini's *Tancredi*

The Gist of the Story:

Setting: the city of Syracuse on the Island of Sicily – about the year 1000 AD, based on Voltaire's play *Tancrède* (1760).

A heroic nobleman's daughter, Amenaide, is caught in the middle of the politics of the men surrounding her. Her father Argirio, his sworn local enemy, and a foreign Saracen invader use her as a pawn in their machinations. Her refusal to betray her secret love for Tancredi, (sung by a mezzo-soprano in a ‘pants’ role), leads to her imprisonment. Tancredi pledges to defend Amenaide in a duel, but the star-crossed lovers must face more trials before they are finally reconciled. In BCO's presentation, two versions of the ending of this story will be offered: first, the tragic ending more reflective of Voltaire's play -- performed in Ferrara in March 1813 -- and then, the original happy ending of the premiere will be offered. Hear both versions and choose which finale you prefer!

The Characters



Who was Gioachino Rossini?

excerpts from Sir Denis Forman's *A Night at the Opera: an irreverent guide to the plots, the singers, the composers, the recordings*, Random House (1998).

HIS HABITAT: Pesaro, Naples, the theatres of Italy and then Paris, with his permanent home in Bologna.

COMMENTS ON THE COMPOSER: “Rossini invented Italian opera as we know it today. For two decades he wrote two operas a year, most of them smash hits. He was feted in the capital cities of opera. His tunes were whistled in every street from Moscow to Cadiz.”

“Rossini brought discipline to Italian opera. He gave an opera, an act, an aria, a definite structure. His plans worked, his operas came off punctually, precisely and in a manner just as the audience expected and liked. He brought to opera an abundance of tunes, many of them amongst the best in the operatic repertoire. He conjured new sounds out of the orchestra. He gave his singers the flashiest numbers that could be devised by man. But the most amazing thing about Rossini is that he began with a vision of what opera could be, that he realized that vision and set going a tradition that is still the heart and soul of the repertory more than a hundred and fifty years later.”

Ethnocentrism and the word

“**Saracen**” an excerpt from Michelle Sauer's, *The Facts on File Companion to British Poetry Before 1600* (2008). “The word **Saracen** is an English adaptation of the Greek word sarakenos (easterner). It was used...to refer to any non-Christian, non-Jewish person, usually from the Middle East but also possibly from North Africa or even Spain; *Arab* or *Muslim* are rough synonyms. The use of the term is usually pejorative and indicates an opponent of Christianity. It is seldom attached to actual cultural knowledge; instead, most literary depictions of Saracens involve simple behavioral stereotypes (treachery, greed, cowardice), either for comic effect or as part pro-Christian propaganda.”

Read more about *Tancredi*

- Hadlock, Heather, "Tancredi and Semiramide", in Emanuele Senici (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
Osborne, Charles, *The Bel Canto Operas of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini*, Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994.
Servadio, Gaia, *Rossini*, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003.