

P A Siepmann
Uppingham School Music Department
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John Blow: Venus & Adonis

OCR A2 'Music for the Stage' - Related Repertoire





John Blow (1649 – 1708)

- Organist of Westminster Abbey
- Gentleman of the Chapel Royal
- Private musician to James II
- Teacher of Henry Purcell (later stepped aside to let Purcell take the Westminster Abbey job)
- Wrote 14 services, more than a hundred anthems, a number of secular odes and some harpsichord music. His only stage piece is 'Venus & Adonis'.





Venus & Adonis (1683)

- *The New Grove* names it as the earliest surviving English opera.
- Owes much to the French influence (particularly that of Jean-Baptiste Lully)
- Became Purcell's model for his 'Dido & Aeneas'
- Through-composed, but with no clear arias or set-pieces
- First performed for the king (Charles II), but later reprised at Josiah Priest's girls' school

Characters

- Cupid *soprano*
- Venus *soprano*
- Adonis *baritone*
- Shepherd *contralto or countertenor*
- Shepherdess *soprano*
- Huntsman *contralto or countertenor*

plus cupids, shepherds and shepherdesses, huntsmen, and courtiers



Plot

- *The usual sort of thing...!*

Venus is with her son Cupid, and he accidentally pierces her with one of his arrows. The next person Venus sees is the handsome youth Adonis, with whom she immediately falls in love. He is a hunter, and she decides that in order to be with him, she will take on the form of the goddess of the hunt, Artemis. Eventually she warns Adonis of the danger of hunting the wild boar, but he does not heed the warning, and is gored to death by the boar.

Structure

- Prologue
- Act I
- Act II
- Act III

Now let's look at the music (worksheet)....