

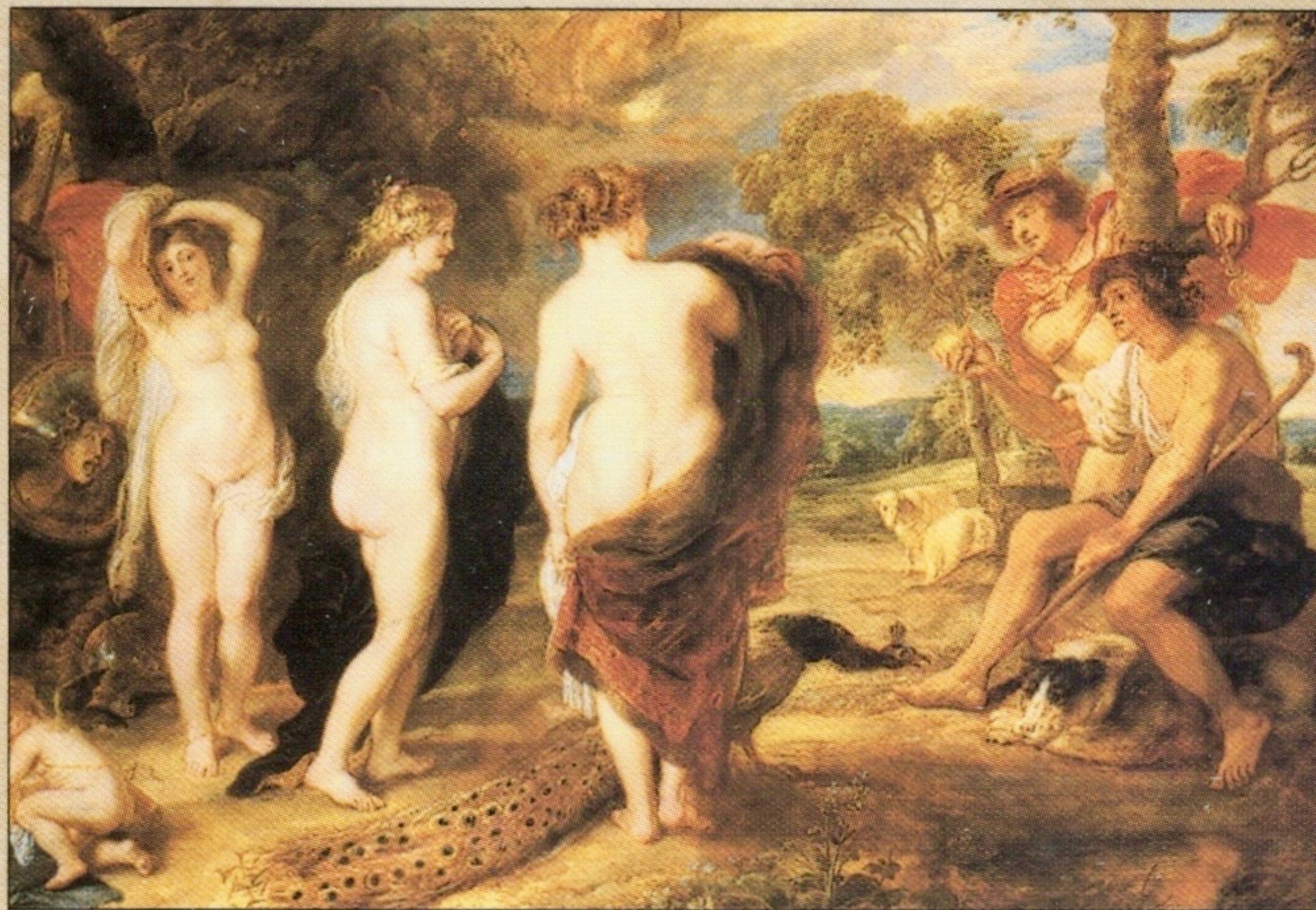
VOL. 21/23

3 CD Set

THE MASTERWORKS

George Frideric Handel

Faramondo



BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

opera in 3 acts

CD 1	CD 2	CD 3
1. Overture 6'32	1. Concerto grosso Op. 6 No. 4 Larghetto 2'37	1. Concerto grosso Op. 6 No. 4 Largo 2'18
ACT I	2. Concerto grosso Op. 6 No. 4 Allegro 2'42	2. Concerto grosso Op. 6 No. 4 Allegro 2'53
2. Recitativo accompagnato: Popolo, figlio 1'11	ACT II	ACT III
3. Choir: Pera, pera 0'21	3. Sinfonia 2'24	3. Sinfonia 2'47
4. Chiede l'ombra 0'54	4. Recitativo: Gia udisti 1'44	4. Recitativo: Mi tradiscono 1'13
5. Aria Gustavo: Viva, si 3'37	5. Aria Rosimonda: Si, l'intendesti 3'55	5. Duetto: Caro, cara 5'15
6. Recitativo: Siam pur fuori 0'55	6. Recitativo/aria Gernando: Si sdegnata 4'53	6. Recitativo: Gia nel campo 0'27
7. Aria Clotilde: Conoscero 4'17	7. Recitativo: Misero 0'38	7. Aria Gernando: Così suole 4'30
8. Recitativo/aria Adolfo: Perdoni...chi ben 6'31	8. Aria Faramondo: Poi che pria 5'58	8. Recitativo: Ritorna pur 0'39
9. Recitativo: A me dunque 1'32	9. Aria Clotilde: Combattuta 6'01	9. Aria Faramondo: Voglio che sia 7'52
10. Aria Rosimonda: Vanne 4'06	10. Recitativo: Faramondo in catene 1'06	10. Recitativo: D'un oltraggiato 1'39
11. Recitativo: Faramondo infelice 0'44	11. Aria Adolfo: Se a piedi 3'58	11. Aria Adolfo: Se ria procella 4'46
12. Aria Faramondo: Rival si tono 3'59	12. Recitativo: Signor, umil 1'22	12. Recitativo: Non isdegnar 2'02
13. Recitativo/aria Gernando: Va...voglio 4'21	13. Aria Gustavo: Sol la brama 3'17	13. Aria Rosimonda: Sappi, crudel 5'40
14. Recitativo: Sino ad ora 1'27	14. Recitativo: Tentai d'aver 0'40	14. Recitativo: Clotilde, il tuo dolor 1'42
15. Arioso Faramondo: Si, tornero 2'20	15. Aria Gernando: Nella terra 4'40	15. Aria Clotilde: Un'aura placida 6'02
16. Recitativo/aria: Rosimonda: Quel..sento 4'21	16. Recitativo: Childerico 1'04	16. Recitativo: Reggi il mio brando 1'54
17. Recitativo: Si, Clotilde 1'09	17. Duetto: Vado e vivo 2'30	17. Aria/choir: Virtu che rende 5'18
18. Aria Gustavo: Vado a recar 2'00	Total time: 49'29	Total time: 56'57
19. Recitativo: Dalla cittade 0'21		
20. Aria Clotilde: Mi parto lieta 5'27		
21. Recitativo: Fra quest'ombre 1'23		
22. Aria Faramondo: Se ben 5'47		
Total time: 63'48		

THE MASTERWORKS

George Frideric Handel

Faramondo



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Program Notes.... John Ostendorf

It is often supposed that the composing career of George Frideric Handel evolved neatly – from the early days in Rome where he developed his Italian vocal style and wrote hundreds of cantatas, on to the first decades in London where his principal output was Italian operas, and then finally, with the unexpected 1741 triumph of Messiah in Dublin, the rest of his output being exclusively English oratorios until his death in 1759. In the simplest terms, this division is roughly correct. The Italian cantatas do derive from Handel's youth in Italy. They also served as source material for both his stage and concert works for the next half century: Handel borrowed from himself widely. But the operas did not stop neatly when he began writing oratorios. Esther, Acis and Galatea, Alexander's Feast and several Italian-language oratorios actually predate the later operas by several seasons. Indeed, it is during this „overlapping“ era, the 1730s (which includes Faramondo), that some of Handel's richest operatic work was accomplished. A decade earlier he could rely on imported superstars to guarantee successful opera premieres: Cuzzoni, Senesino and Faustina had generated plenty of white heat onstage and off. With their departure from the London scene in the mid 1730s, with the sudden popularity of the new English musicale (principally John Gay's The Beggar's Opera), and a parallel, waning enthusiasm for Italian opera, George Frideric Handel was facing major pressure. On the one hand, he responded with sacred and secular English-language concert works, which he hoped would suit the new fashion. They did. But instead of simultaneously turning his back on Italian opera, he redoubled his efforts in the late 1730s – he dug more deeply into his genius.



The 1737 Spring Season

Faramondo is one of the works from this period. Let us consider the particularly difficult context in which it was composed. The previous season, Spring 1737, each of Handel's new stage works, Arminio, Giustino and Berenice, had failed pitifully at Covent Garden, despite the support of the royal family. The collapse of the rival Opera of the Nobility in 1737 did little to cheer Handel, as it more signalled the failure of Italian opera in England than any victory for the composer. On top of all this, Handel suffered some sort of stroke during the spring, leaving one arm paralysed. The composer, now in his 52nd year, was forced to take a „cure“ in the sulphur baths at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) in the summer before Faramondo. Just how serious his affliction has been the subject of debate, some suggesting a mere bout of rheumatism. He is reported to have sat three times as long as his fellow patients in the mud and sulphur, and then to have passed many hours practising on the local convent organ – presumably with all ten fingers – to the delight of the nuns and passersby.

The Death of Queen Caroline

Back in London by late October 1737, Handel was in robust health and reportedly optimistic. Within a few weeks he was at work on a new opera, Faramondo, intended for the King's Theatre at the Haymarket. Upon his return he had been instantly re-engaged as resident composer for £ 1000 per year. But bad luck still plagued him: a few days after beginning work on the score, his most supportive patron, Queen Caroline, a fellow Hanoverian, whom Handel has known since his childhood, died. All the London theatres closed for weeks; Faramondo was put aside. The depth of Handel's mourning is evident in the sumptuous anthem, The Ways of Zion Do Mourn, which he composed for the Queen's funeral at Westminster Abbey in December. This elaborate composition (from which he later borrowed for Saul and Israel in Egypt), was created in the middle of his own work on Faramondo and further illustrates this overlapping, crosspollination of English and Italian styles in this rich creative period. By Christmas, Handel was again at work on the opera. The theatres were reopened at New Year's, and the three-act Italian drama Faramondo was premiered on January 3, 1738.



The Cast

At the premiere of Faramondo, Handel was pinning his hopes for the title role on the debut of the castrato Caffarelli (Gaetano Majorano), a prize pupil of Handel's long-time London rival, Porpora. The singer was in ill health that winter, was personally difficult and proved unpopular with the public that revered the memory of Senesino and Farinelli. Caffarelli would only last a single season in London, returning thereafter to Italy, where his bad manners onstage (he attempted to humiliate a diva with obscene hand gestures) landed him in jail. Handel had also secured the services of a young French soprano, Elisabeth Duparc (dubbed „La Francesina“), who remained with him until his very last seasons. Duparc sang Clotilde, opposite an Italian mezzo-soprano, Maria Marchesina („La Lucchesina“) in the role of Rosimonda. The bass sensation Antonio Montagnana sang King Gustavo. Also in the fine cast were Margherita Chimenti (Adolfo), the contralto profundo Signora Antonia Merighi and Antonio Lottini (Teabaldo), several of whom had come over from the Opera of the Nobility to sing with Handel. Also in Faramondo was the young William Savage in the small role of Childerico. This was interesting casting: Savage was a teenage English singer performing a treble role in falsetto or „countertenor“ register. He was definitely not a castrato (his son later performed for Handel). Indeed, it was for him the composer wrote the title role of Imeneo, begun the following summer in the normal tenor register. By the time this opera was completed two seasons later, Savage's voice placement had at last settled in the bass range – the last act of Imeneo's assignment (as well as Savage's role in Handel's final opera, Deidamia) is composed entirely in bass clef!

The Premiere

A notice in the London Daily Post: „At the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market this Day, January the 3rd, will be perform'd a New Opera, call'd FARAMONDO... To begin at Six o'Clock.“ The three-act Italian libretto was by Apostolo Zeno with some abridgements. Handel's luck was doubly bad: since October an English burlesque, John Lampe's The Dragon of Wantley, had been enjoying week after week of sold-out houses. Its cast included several



former Handelian stars. Like The Beggar's Opera before it, the work parodied Italian opera cleverly (even Handel himself attended and admired it) and played for a record 69 performances. For the Queen's funeral concert, Handel had had at his disposal 80 choristers and more than 100 instrumentalists, financed entirely by the royal family! For his own opera, however, he could only afford a small complement of strings with a few additional, sparsely employed, obbligato instruments. Further, his distinguished vocal cast was obliged to provide the forces for several „choruses“: Faramondo and his sister Clotilde served as mezzo and soprano in the Act I „Pera, Pera“ (chorus, calling enthusiastically for their own deaths!). Perhaps this works on a modern compact disc, where one at least cannot see the performers, but it must have been very silly – and humiliating – at the premiere. Nonetheless, the audience was reportedly delighted with Faramondo. One review: „Last night the new opera was perform'd at the King's to a splendid Audience and met with general Applause. It being the first time of Mr Handel's Appearance this Season, he was honor'd with extraordinary and repeated Signs of Approbation.“ The opera ran for seven January 1738 performances – 3, 7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 24 and was then revived for a single evening on May 16. George Frederic Handel very much loved this score and published it a month after the premiere, even inviting subscribers to pick up their copies at his own house. Those who heard the opera admired it, but Italian opera's day in England was over. Handel included several arias in a collection of „favourite airs“ published that September, and performed the Act II duet „Vado e vivo“ at a gala concert in Dublin following the Messiah premiere in 1741. Finally a Faramondo aria (Rosimonda's „Sì, l'intendesti“) was sung by La Francesina (now a mezzo) in a 1752 concert, fourteen years after her premiere performance with Handel in London. Nonetheless, it is a superb score. Handel's most astute biographer, Paul Henry Lang, considered the opera in its historical context: „The original libretto of this opera was undoubtedly good, but it was so whittled down and twisted around by Handel's unknown adapter, that it resists any reasonable analysis – the confused goings on and the complicated intrigues prevented Handel from shaping the fine music he composed into a coherent whole...but we cannot so simply disregard this music which, beginning with the exceptionally fine overture, is very



attractive...the texture is light and elegant, both vocal and instrumental writing spirited – every leap fits, every accent suits...surely the sophisticated, varied and sprightly rhythm that infuses this score with remarkable liveliness does not reflect the working of a mind afflicted with illness. There is much engaging love-music in Faramondo.“

FARAMONDO: Plot Synopsis

Time: Europe in the 2nd century B.C.

ACT I.

In a sacred cypress grove, Gustavo (baritone), King of the Cimbrians, and Prince Adolfo (soprano) lament the death of the king's son, Sveno, at the hands of the enemy Faramondo (mezzo), the Frankish king. Gustavo and those with him swear vengeance. Faramondo's sister, Princess Clotilde (soprano) is led in. Adolfo, who loves her, convinces his father to spare her life. Left alone, the two lovers declare their affections. Clotilde asks Adolfo to swear allegiance to her brother Faramondo. Gustavo's daughter, Princess Rosimonda (mezzo) is surprised in her own quarters by Frankish soldiers. Faramondo himself arrives and is smitten by the lovely Rosimonda. She condemns him for not only her brother Sveno's death, but for his alliance with the Swabian King Gernando (alto). Faramondo offers Rosimonda his own life; but she too is struck by love and cannot kill him. King Gernando enters and announces his intention to keep Rosimonda for himself. Faramondo tries to hide his own feelings for Rosimonda, but he cannot: relations between the two monarchs are strained. Left alone, the evil Gernando plans to do away with his rival Faramondo. Gernando then presents himself to Rosimonda, who spurns him. Gernando proposes to kill Faramondo to earn her hand. She is disgusted by this treachery. Faramondo overhears this, disarms Gernando, but then decides to spare him. Learning Faramondo is in the palace, Gustavo sends his own men to waylay him. Clotilde begs Adolfo to intercede. Adolfo prohibits the king and his men from slaying Faramondo, prompting a terrible confrontation between son and father. Faramondo asks for Rosimonda's hand; King Gustavo wants only his death.



ACT II.

Gernando presents himself to Gustavo and suggests the two ally themselves against Faramondo. If Gernando brings him the Frankish king's head, Gustavo will grant him his daughter's hand. Meanwhile, Clotilde begs Faramondo to depart, but he must see Rosimonda again. The two meet; Rosimonda, though torn, dismisses him. Dejected, he yields listlessly to Gustavo's soldiers, but Rosimonda will not allow Faramondo to be executed. Clotilde proposes pleading Faramondo's case again to Gustavo. Gustavo consents to free his son Adolfo, whom he has imprisoned, but refuses to free Faramondo. Rosimonda herself secretly determines to set Faramondo free; she can no longer hide her love. She announces her intentions and the two are briefly happy.

ACT III.

Gustavo curses both his children for their treachery – Faramondo has been set free by Rosimonda. Meantime, Gustavo's lieutenant, Teobaldo (baritone), has been won over by Gernando, who is prepared to do anything to win Rosimonda – including abducting her. Later, Gustavo learns Rosimonda has indeed been abducted by Gernando. Teobaldo's own men attempt to take the king hostage, but Faramondo arrives and prevents Gustavo's capture. Gustavo is still unforgiving: he still condemns Faramondo. Rosimonda arrives, rescued by Faramondo's men. Gernando has been captured. All still seems irreconcilable, when a messenger from Teobaldo arrives. That warrior, on his deathbed, has revealed that Prince Sveno, whom King Faramondo had killed, was, actually, not Gustavo's son after all. The two infants were switched at birth! This news changes everything: Gustavo's vow of vengeance is now obsolete. Adolfo and Clotilde can wed, as can Rosimonda and King Faramondo, who grants everyone pardon, amidst general rejoicing.



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George Frideric Handel

Faramondo

Opera in 3 acts

Faramondo: **D'Anna Fortunato**

Clotilde: **Julianne Baird**

Gernando: **Drew Minter**

Rosimonda: **Jennifer Lane**

Adolfo: **Mary Ellen Callahan**

Gustavo: **Peter Castaldi**

Childerico: **Lorie Gratis**

Teobaldo: **Mark Singer**

**BREWER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA,
Rudolph Palmer**

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Producer: John Ostendorf

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