

George Frideric Handel

# RODELINDA

December 3, 2011

Conductor **Harry Bicket**  
Production **Stephen Wadsworth**  
Set Designer **Thomas Lynch**  
Costume Designer  
**Martin Pakledinaz**  
Lighting Designer  
**Peter Kaczorowski**

Live in HD Host **Deborah Voigt**

Rodelinda **Renée Fleming**  
Eduige **Stephanie Blythe**  
Bertarido **Andreas Scholl**  
Unulfo **Iestyn Davies**  
Grimoaldo **Joseph Kaiser**  
Garibaldo **Shenyang**

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*Milan, early 18th century. Bertarido, King of Lombardy, has been deposed by Grimoaldo and is presumed dead, while his queen, Rodelinda, and their young son, Flavio, have been left behind. Grimoaldo was promised the hand of Bertarido's sister, Eduige, which would grant him a legitimate claim to the throne, by she has so far resisted his attempts. Meanwhile Bertarido, who spread the rumor of his own death to gain time, plans to return in disguise to rescue his wife and son. Grimoaldo, resolved to become king, is counseled by his confidant, Garibaldo, and Unulfo, a member of Bertarido's cabinet who is the only person who knows that Bertarido lives.*

**ACT I** Rodelinda and her son are being held prisoner. Grimoaldo announces his wish to marry her instead of Eduige to gain the throne, but the outraged Rodelinda refuses him. Appalled by Grimoaldo's behavior, Eduige resolves to see him brought down.

Bertarido arrives in the city, disguised as a soldier. Together with the loyal Unulfo, he witnesses a meeting between Rodelinda and Garibaldo, in which Garibaldo informs her of Grimoaldo's ultimatum: if Rodelinda refuses to marry the usurper, her son will die. Defeated, Rodelinda is forced to agree. Bertarido is dismayed at her apparent betrayal.

INTERMISSION

**ACT II** Garibaldo offers his services to Eduige in exchange for her hand but realizes from her response that she may still be in love with Grimoaldo. Rodelinda reassures Eduige that her son's future is her greatest concern. Eduige shares with Rodelinda her confused anger over Grimoaldo's rejection of her. Rodelinda now presents Grimoaldo with an ultimatum of her own: she will marry him if he personally kills her son before her eyes. Her gambit works—Grimoaldo backs down; but he is taken with Rodelinda's courage and feels that he might actually come to love her. Garibaldo considers the usurper's weakness and states that power must be seized at any cost.

Eduige meets Bertarido, overjoyed to find him alive. She assures him of Rodelinda's constancy. Unulfo brings Rodelinda and reunites her with Bertarido. When they are discovered together by Grimoaldo, he orders Bertarido—whom he has never seen before—taken into custody and, enraged, bids them take their final farewells. Bertarido will soon die.

INTERMISSION

**ACT III** Eduige and Unulfo plan Bertarido's rescue from prison. Garibaldo advises Grimoaldo to have Bertarido killed right away, but Grimoaldo hesitates.

Bertarido finds a weapon dropped through the bars of his cell. In the darkness he strikes out at what he believes to be an assassin—but it is Unulfo. Though wounded, Unulfo manages to get Bertarido to change out of the clothes he has been seen in. The two men escape through a tunnel. Rodelinda, who arrives with Eduige to rescue her husband, finds only Bertarido's clothes covered with Unulfo's blood. She imagines the worst.

Grimoaldo is tormented by his deeds. As Garibaldo is about to assassinate the sleeping usurper, Bertarido appears and kills Garibaldo. He then challenges Grimoaldo to take his revenge on his own savior. Grimoaldo is himself ready to surrender and restores wife, child, and throne to the rightful king. His apology to Eduige goes unheeded at first, but eventually she forgives him. The survivors can envision and celebrate a happier future.

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