

ARMIDE

Music by Christoph Willibald Gluck

Libretto by Philippe Quinault

First Performance: Opéra [Académie royale], Paris, September 23, 1777

Armide, sorceress and niece to King Hidraot of Damascus, has rendered powerless the Knights of the Crusade, failing only with Rinaldo. A celebration in honor of Damascus' victory is premature; Aront, the army leader, brings news that Rinaldo has freed the captive knights. Aront dies; the citizens of Damacus cry for vengeance. Rinaldo is exiled, having incurred the wrath of the Cursade commander. He and the knight Artemidor wander into a wood, where under Armide's enchantment they are bound while sleeping. Armide, intending to slay the hero, falls in love with him instead and spirits him away. Torn by guilt at this forbidden passion, Armide summons the Furies to deliver her. Hate is powerless against her great love, but prophesies that Rinaldo will one day leave Armide of his own accord. On their way through the wood to rescue Rinaldo, his friend Ubaldo and a Danish knight successful resist Armide's demons, who appear in the forms of the loved ones, and find their way to the palace. They persuade Rinaldo to rededicate himself to his mission. He bids farewell to Armide, who in despair orders her demons to fire the palace. She vanishes in the air (or dies in the holocaust).