

# Il re pastore

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

**AN OPERA IN TWO ACTS**

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Libretto by Pietro Metastasio adapted by Gianbattista Varesco, Salzburg court chaplain.

Edited for the *New Mozart Edition (Neue Mozart-Ausgabe)* by Pierluigi Petrobelli and Wolfgang Rehm.

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English translation by Amanda Holden, copyright owner.

*Il re pastore* was first performed at the palace of the Archbishop, Salzburg, on 23 April 1775.

Conductor

**Jean-Marie Zeitouni\***

Stage Director

**Chas Rader-Shieber**

Set Designer

**David Zinn**

Costume Designer

**Robert Perdziola**

Lighting Designer

**Paul Palazzo\***

Wig and Makeup Designer

**Tom Watson**

English Diction Specialist

**Erie Mills**

Repetiteur

**Damien Francoeur-Krzyzek**

Assistant Stage Director

**Jen Nicoll**

Stage Manager

**Lisa M. Ellis**

Assistant Stage Manager

**Valerie J. Clatworthy**

Intern Assistant Stage Manager

**Trevor Regars**

**THE CAST** (in order of appearance)

Aminta, a shepherd, rightful heir  
to the throne of Sidon

**Heidi Stober\***

Elisa, a young noblewoman  
in love with Aminta

**Maureen McKay**

Agenore, advisor to Alexander  
in love with Tamiri

**Paul Appleby°**

Alexander, Emperor of Macedonia

**Alek Shrader°**

Tamiri, daughter of the usurper of  
Sidon's throne, in love with Agenore

**Daniela Mack\***

The action takes place in an  
English country house.

**There will be one intermission.**

**The performance will last approximately  
two hours and twenty minutes.**

\* OTSL debut

° Former Gerdine Young Artist

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from Whitaker Foundation.

Jean-Marie Zeitouni's engagement is sponsored by the  
Edward Chase Garvey Memorial Trust.

Sir John Lavery (1856–1941).

*A Family Group at St. Fagan's* (detail).

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## SYNOPSIS

### Act One

Aminta, a simple shepherd, is awaiting his lover, the young noblewoman Elisa. She arrives to tell him the news: Sidon's legitimate king, who now lives in obscurity, soon will be restored by Emperor Alexander to his rightful place. Though Aminta reminds her of her own royal lineage, Elisa is determined to live a rustic life with him instead. Aminta thanks the gods for her love and for his simple, uncomplicated existence.

Agenore and Alexander interrupt his daydream. Agenore, who has known all along that Aminta is the true king, points him out to the conqueror. Alexander is impressed with Aminta's sincerity, and tells Agenore that this humble young shepherd will make a fine king.

Although the exiled princess Tamiri is in love with Agenore, she refuses to accompany him to court, believing that Alexander is responsible for her father's murder. Agenore tries to convince her that Alexander had no part in her loss; but, despite his protestations, she questions his loyalty.

Elisa tells Aminta that her father has consented to their marriage. They are interrupted by Agenore, who announces to the astonished couple that Aminta is no shepherd: he is Abdolonymus, king of Sidon. Elisa insists that Aminta's first duty is to take the throne. The lovers assure each other that they will remain faithful regardless of Aminta's newfound rank.

### Act Two

Searching for Aminta, Elisa meets Agenore, who brusquely sends her away. When Aminta comes in search of Elisa, Agenore stops him, reminding him that as king, his first duty is to Alexander. Alexander himself tells Aminta that although his humility will make him a great leader, he must leave his rustic garments behind and return in royal attire to greet his new subjects.

Alexander is planning to leave Sidon for further conquests. To ensure that he is fondly remembered, he has decided to give the hand of Tamiri, the daughter of his late enemy, in marriage to Aminta, the new king. Alexander sends Agenore, who is crushed by this development, to find Tamiri. Alexander is convinced that he has made everyone happy and will leave Sidon without an enemy.

Agenore tells Aminta that the gods have chosen a wife for him (meaning Tamiri), but a misunderstanding ensues. When Aminta responds that he would not be able to rule without her (referring not to Tamiri but to Elisa, and his intent to give up the throne to marry her), Agenore believes that Tamiri is lost to him, and is devastated.

Agenore is accosted by Elisa and tells her that Aminta will indeed give his hand in marriage to Tamiri. Elisa vows to plead with Alexander and to hear the news from Aminta himself. Tamiri demands

to know why he himself did not bring her the news of her impending marriage to Aminta, and she cruelly orders him to attend her wedding. Agenore reluctantly agrees to obey his new queen, as she questions his willingness to give her hand to the new king.

As Alexander prays before the coronation, Tamiri throws herself at his feet and begs him to reconsider. Elisa, more defiant, upbraids him for stealing her happiness. Aminta announces that he cannot be king if it means giving up a life with Elisa.

Touched by these declarations of love, Alexander changes his mind and tells the two couples that he will not get in the way of their happiness. Furthermore, Aminta and Elisa will be king and queen of Sidon and Agenore and Tamiri will soon rule their own land. The four lovers sing the praises of the emperor, and the praises of true love.

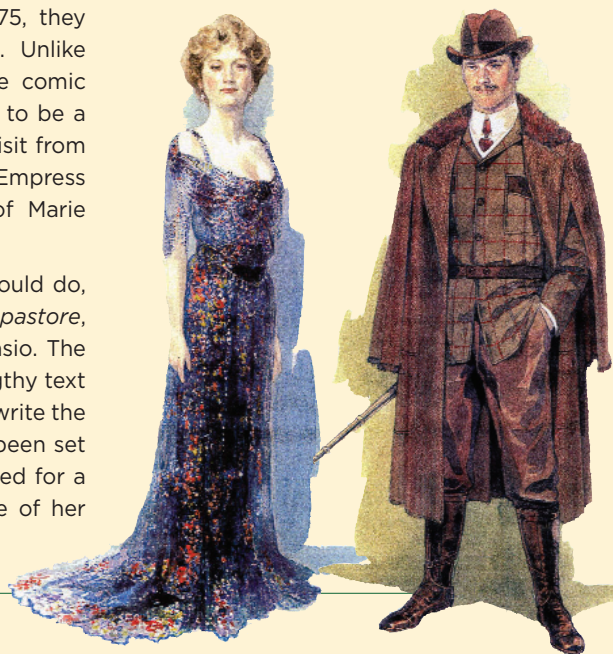
### HISTORICAL NOTE

When the nineteen-year-old Mozart and his father returned to Salzburg from Munich in March 1775, they found an important commission waiting for them. Unlike the project in Munich, which was a fashionable comic opera titled *La finta giardiniera* (K.196), this was to be a serious entertainment for a serious occasion: a visit from Archduke Maximilian Franz, the youngest son of Empress Maria Theresa (and the brother, incidentally, of Marie Antoinette).

Obviously only an *opera seria* (serious opera) would do, and an appropriate text was quickly found: *Il re pastore*, written in 1751 by the Vienna court poet Metastasio. The Salzburg court chaplain cut and trimmed the lengthy text and gave it to Mozart, who then had six weeks to write the music. It was a popular text which had already been set by more than a dozen composers; it was first used for a birthday celebration for Maria Theresa, with five of her

children playing the leading roles. It had all the right elements for a court performance: a noble and generous king, two pairs of lovers, and a story about the conflict between love and duty.

Because five arias had been cut from the original libretto, two acts compressed into one and the recitatives reduced, *Il re pastore* could not really be considered a full-fledged *opera seria* but rather “a *Serenata* in two acts.” It offers, nevertheless, some of the composer’s most ravishing music, including a magical duet for the lovers, and a finale in which the five principals form an ensemble that looks forward to many brilliant groupings in later operas. The orchestration features two English horns, a rarity in that period, and we are transported to an Arcadian pastoral paradise with the appropriate solos for flute and violin. Although it would be five years before Mozart again wrote an opera, it was to be another *opera seria* and one of his greatest dramas: *Idomeneo*, composed in 1780 at the age of twenty-four.



Costume designs for Aminta and Alexander by Robert Perdziola.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

At an English country house of our imagining, an aristocratic gentleman and his fiancée entertain their guests, a couple from the city. Excited, but nervous over her impending marriage to a man of great privilege and power, the bride-to-be loses herself in a summer afternoon’s parlor entertainment: enacting the story of *Il re pastore*. As the weekend guests enjoy getting caught up in the opera, they reveal their longing for the simplicity of country life, just as their servants, in turn, relish a taste of the splendor of the upper class.

This bittersweet longing for the eternal sense of “other” is mirrored in the story of Mozart’s opera, where a simple shepherd resists his true calling as a king, and a noble young lady will gladly give up her position for a life of love.

In our English household, the young lady about to marry takes on the role of the shepherd king Aminta, reflecting her own misgivings; while the lady’s maid portrays Elisa, the noblewoman, affording her a taste of the high life that she will never be allowed to live.

For each of the characters in Mozart’s story, there is the fulfillment of the dream that a noble nature alone can change the social order, but there is no such fantasy in our world. Mozart’s poignant tale of uncomplicated transformation becomes, in this new setting, a reflection of the eternal desire to become other than who we really are, and who society commands us to be.

Chas Rader-Shieber