

Candle-Lit Antonacci Laments All through the Night at White Light Festival

by [Bruce-Michael Gelbert](#) |



photo by LoLL Willems

Anna Caterina Antonacci in "Era la notte"

On November 13 and 14, Italian soprano Anna Caterina Antonacci made rare appearances here, at the Rose Theater, in “Era la notte,” a staged chamber piece comprising selections by early Baroque composers Pietro Antonio Giramo, Claudio Monteverdi, and Barbara Strozzi, one of few women from that era whose work has come down to us, linked by instrumental music by Biagio Marini, and presented as part of Lincoln Center’s month-long White Light Festival. The second night’s performance is considered here.

Antonacci is a pure-voiced lyric, perhaps lirico-spinto soprano, who illuminated the spare Baroque line with intensity and did not eschew judicious use of chest voice. The music was played by a septet of soloists from the French orchestra Les Siècles and director Juliette Deschamps and designers Dominique Bruguière (lighting), Cécile Degos (set), and Christian Lacroix (costumes) helped realize the endeavor.

The vocal works were laments, one of them a mad scene as well.

Against a wall of lit candles, Antonacci gave voice to Giramo’s cantata “Lamento della pazza: Chi non mi conosce dirà,” a lament with more than a touch of madness, concerning the knight who deserted her. S

he drank from a bucket in which the rags she made of her sleeves had been soaking, paced in circles, poured other buckets of water out onto the stage, drenching it, and took one of the candles and extinguished it in the water.

In Monteverdi's moving "Lasciatemi morire," the only excerpt that survives from his opera "Arianna," Antonacci, as Arianna (Ariadne), lamented that Teseo (Theseus) abandoned her.

In Strozzi's "Lagrimie mie, a che vi trattenete," a deeply pained plaint for a love imprisoned and tortured, Antonacci sang music that was lightly florid, the line fluttering, and addressed to Lidia—a confidante or the beloved? The water at Antonacci's feet turned as red as blood.

In Monteverdi's cantata "Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda," Antonacci, dressed for combat, with a suit of armor on the ground, described the fierce battle between the Christian Crusader Tancredi and Clorinda, the Muslim woman he loves. She kicked a piece of the armor into the pool at the edge of the stage, now blood-red again. Water rained down on the candles, extinguishing those that were still lit. Antonacci's Clorinda was fatally wounded by Tancredi and her identity revealed to him. With water with which he filled his helmet, he temporarily revived her, but ultimately she expired.

The Marini works, dances and church tones from his Opus 22, were the passacalio a terzo e a quattro, sinfonia sesto tuono, sinfonia primo tuono, sinfonia terzo tuono, balletto secondo a terzo e a quattro, and zarabanda terza.

The musicians were Sébastien Richaud and Rachel Rowntree on violin, François Joubert-Caillet on viola da gamba, Julien Barre on cello, Christian Staude on contrabass, Manuel de Grange on theorbo, and Johannes Keller on harpsichord.

The White Light Festival continues through November 23. Visit www.WhiteLightFestival.org for further information.