

Giorgio Battistelli Kepler's Dream

A music theatre in six scenes

Text based on works of Johannes Kepler, arranged as a libretto by the composer

"His reservations and wake states he reserved to the task of repeating a preexisting book in an idiom strange to him."

(J. L. Borges)



In 1593 Johannes Kepler wrote a short dissertation which he entered in order to be accepted to the academic body of teachers of Tübingen University. In this treatise, Kepler tried to point out how the celestial phenomena would appear to an observer if he could watch them from the Moon.

This dissertation was not accepted because of its ideas being strongly influenced by Copernicus, and such a notion of the world did not comply with the scientific-academic orientation of Tübingen then.

In 1609 Kepler re-worked the opus and enriched it with details of lunar geography, casting it into a final shape with the title "*Somnium or 'Belated work about lunar astronomy'*".

To this short work, seemingly created only out of Kepler's phantasy, he added not less than 223 explanatory notes, three times as long as the main text body and containing a description of celestial appearances. The Copernican system is the evident basis for it.

In its dramaturgical structure, the libretto concentrates on the three characters of the "Somnium", but does consider some aspects of Kepler's biography.

The central characters of the dream are DURACOTUS (baritone) representing the imaginary "second self" of Kepler; FIOLXHILDE (mezzo-soprano) is an image of Katharina, Kepler's mother who had been imputed of sorcery; and finally the DEMON (actor) who reports from and tells about the geography of Levania (also "Lebana" which is Hebraic for "Moon").

The score is divided into six scenes: *Forgetting; The Translation into The Dream; The Voyage; The Vision; The Spell for Awakening; The Recollection*, each following the other without interruption.

"... the contemporary human believes in what he reads in the papers, but not in what is in the stars."

(Ernst Jünger)

For five years, the young Duracotus studied the science of the skies with his master Tycho Brahe in Denmark. Now he is returning home from abroad. FIOLXHILDE, his mother, calls him and proposes him to visit Levania; Duracotus begs her to unveil the "secret knowledge" that even the masters of astronomy - of which he is a connoisseur himself - have not yet achieved.

Through the power of his magic spells, the Demon of Levania appears, telling of the difficulties of a voyage through the cosmos, but also describing the celestial phenomena as they can be observed from Levania. The work ends with Duracotus' awakening from his dream that has been a tale of magic as well as of science, a tale that the magic fairies of times long bygone will hand over in a night unknown.

"One of the strange aspects of dreaming is the possible connection of any facts whatsoever."

(Paul Valéry)

Rome, June 1990 Giorgio Battistelli