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The Shepherd, the Sea Nymph And the Big Rock, Abridged



Kendra Colton and John Elwes sang the title roles in a concert performance of Handel's short opera "Acis and Galatea" on Tuesday night.

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This can be short. Certainly the opera is.

In fact, the Aulos Ensemble made Handel's "Acis and Galatea" even shorter for a concert performance in the Medieval Sculpture Hall of the Metropolitan Museum on Tuesday evening, with several arias shorn of their da capo endings and another dropped altogether. The trims, unfortunate in an already fast-paced round of delicious melodies, had no doubt been made to accommodate the two performances originally scheduled, at 6:30 and 8:30.

In any event, the later one was canceled because of lagging ticket sales. More's the pity, for this work (technically a serenata) is a little gem, and Aulos polished it to a fine luster.

The plot, taken more or less from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," is simple: the shepherd Acis and the sea nymph Galatea fall blissfully in love. The monster Polyphemus intrudes,

fixating on Galatea and crushing Acis under a huge rock. All mourn.

John Elwes sang strongly as Acis despite an occasional graininess to his tone. His earnest demeanor somewhat belied the sentiment of the buoyant duet "Happy we." Kendra Colton, as Galatea, carried herself like a goddess and sang radiantly and vividly. Curtis Streetman brought the appropriate bluster to the role of Polyphemus and his surefire aria, "O ruddier than the cherry."

The Aulos players were their usual expert selves. Having the oboist Marc Schachman as accompanist or duet partner must be a mixed blessing for a singer, since he sings as well as most, better than some.

In all, it was an utter delight. If the performers had changed their minds and offered a second run-through after all, many of the loudly appreciative audience members would surely have stayed to hear it again.