

La Calisto

Isleworth Baroque

Public Hall, Isleworth, 19th October

It is puzzling that La Calisto is not performed more often. It has lots of sex, cross dressing, identity theft, clowning and above all some lovely music.

This production, in Isleworth Baroque's fifth annual season, seemed to have more professional – or semi-professional - singers and players than in previous years, but perhaps that's just because the group keeps on getting better. With Helena Brown directing proceedings from the harpsichord, the orchestra, complete with the mellow underpinning of viols and archlute, provided a much richer and more secure support than ever before.

Harriet Fraser as Diana, both *in propria persona* and as Jove's disguise, gave a performance which was touched by real distinction. She has a fine, rich soprano voice, powerful when required but also capable of genuine pianissimo. Her first act aria, 'Unkindly solitude', was beautifully sung and her passages with Calisto and Endymion were outstanding. Janet Oates's limpid and pure voice was ideal for the part of Calisto and her singing, including ornamentation, was perhaps nearest to what we think of nowadays as the baroque style. 'Sweet honey is my food' in act one was particularly lovely.

In a generally fine cast Susan Grant as Endymion used her warm contralto to good effect and Rosalind Fuller gave an enjoyably goatish performance as Satirino, including some inspired clowning with Linfea, sung by Sally Pinney. The Children's Dance in act two was entrancing and the whole production was impressively directed by Annee Blott: another triumph notched up by Isleworth Baroque.

Philip Wilson

(249 words)