

*Lilith* tells the fascinating story of the Jewish myth of Lilith, Adam's first wife. Created equals with Adam, she fled when he demanded sexual dominance. She is forever condemned by God and His messenger angels to be a Demon Queen, responsible for infant death, and seducing men by night. She also persuades Eve to taste a certain forbidden fruit...

The myth of Lilith emerges from the convergence of 2 different cultural needs. The older one is of an archetypal she-demon figure, associated with wind and storms, night and sex. She appears in many ancient cultures, in different forms and with different names. The other is the disparity in the two accounts of creation in the Old Testament. Genesis 1 relates the creation of man and woman together, after which they name the animals. Genesis 2 states that Adam was created, but that having named and associated with the animals, he was lonely and requested a mate. What happened to the first woman? This lacuna gave rise to the idea of a first wife – and she merged with the she-demon archetype. She also could then be associated with the fall of Eve, as the serpent figure; in ancient art she is often represented as having a beautiful, golden-haired woman's top half, descending into a serpentine body. After Adam and Eve's banishment from Eden, the myth continues – that he returned to Lilith, spawning demon babies with her, but then went back to Eve again. Lilith quite obviously represents the fear of the strong woman and her primal, physical, sexual nature – in contrast to a 'feminine' and passive virginal (and yet maternal) ideal.

*Lilith* is structured as a Baroque oratorio, with a chorus that functions much as Handel's do – almost as another character, reacting and responding as well as commenting on events. There are a few main solo roles, with smaller ones written to satisfy the talents of Isleworth Baroque; a local primary school choir is lined up to play God. The orchestra is scored for Isleworth Baroque's forces including two trumpets, wind, and percussion as well as strings and continuo.

I have written the libretto myself, though much of it is either quoting, paraphrasing or inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost* (this is acknowledged throughout the libretto footnotes).

*Janet Oates*

### **Solos**

Lilith: soprano  
Adam: tenor  
Eve: soprano  
A mother: soprano  
Three angels: mezzos / countertenors  
Other solos for each voice type, emerging from the chorus  
God: children's choir  
Chorus of mankind

### **Orchestra**

Continuo: harpsichord, theorbo, bassoon, viola da gamba  
Wind: 2 trumpets, 2 oboes, 2 flutes, 2 recorders, bassoon  
Strings: violins (including solos), violas, cellos (including solos)  
Percussion: timpani, drum, child's glockenspiel, finger cymbals.