

The LATIN QUARTER

See film-clips

Producer's Notes – "Goddesses, Myths and Mortals"

Why these three stories?

If there is a pecking order, I suppose the Boethius piece was the film I wanted to make. It is an abridged version from a longer idea which is still in my drawer..

The Choice of Paris is a comparatively lightweight piece, but a seminal myth all the same. It gave me the chance to experiment a little with our technology – a colleague who saw a preview said it reminded him of Doctor Who in the 1970's. Well, I was a big fan of Doctor Who, so I guess that's an influence!

Dido and Aeneas is an experiment in dramatic verse. Epic verse by nature has speeches which go on for line after line. It works well in epic, in song, in opera, but not in something like this. So I selected lines from the original and edited them into shorter exchanges. The effect of antilabe (where a second or even third speaker completes the metric line) I think is an overwhelming success, and I very much hope to work on a longer version of Virgil's Aeneid which I will edit in a similar fashion.

Actors

Actors from different European countries help create a sense of the broad heritage of Latin. We worked closely for some months before filming, and the actors showed sensitivity to the demands of the language in its different eras. During practice we enjoyed a few free-range moments and did not concentrate exclusively on the words spoken in the films. I think this comes across in the films where the speakers have a natural flow. Maybe now the actors can go on from here and buy a toga in the forum or book a chariot ...

Costume and set

We looked closely at how people spoke Latin in the different eras, but the same was not applied to costume and set. It is neither ancient nor modern, not in any over-deliberate sense. Hints and suggestions of each, I suppose. In any case there is a timelessness to great myths and stories like these that transcends particular eras. When Boethius's gaolers sit there in their trainers chatting in Latin it does not jar, not to me at least. Here is Latin quietly alive in the 21st century.

Funding and support

I am very grateful to Lingua (UK) for helping to recruit the multilingual performers; to Room 15 Films for a lot more technical support than they ever charged us for; to Mark Latimer, one of the world's best jazz/classical pianists, for his music; to Gimell Records who allowed us to use the *Miserere* at no cost (for the initial print run at least), on the grounds that "if someone is crazy enough to make a film in Latin they need all the support they can get"; to Prof. Roger Wright of Liverpool University for his advice on post-classical Latin; to Wilf O'Neill, a Latin audio specialist, for his input to the scripts; to Julian Morgan for showing a preview at a conference of Latin teachers in Denmark – the feedback encouraged us to pursue the full launch; and perhaps most of all to the many people all over the world who have bought my Latin courses and enabled those royalties to be invested in projects like this.

G.D.A.Sharpley, October 2007