

HIRENA...Elizabeth Weigall

AGAPE...Emily Merrill

CHIONIA...Julie Kanter

DULCITIUS...Oren Margolis

SISINIUS...Alexander Wragge-Morley

DIOCLETIAN...Michael Clasby

SOLDIER ONE...Victoria Raffan

SOLDIER TWO...Jennifer Drew

GUARD...Jennifer Hicks

WIFE OF DULCITIUS...Catherine Robinson

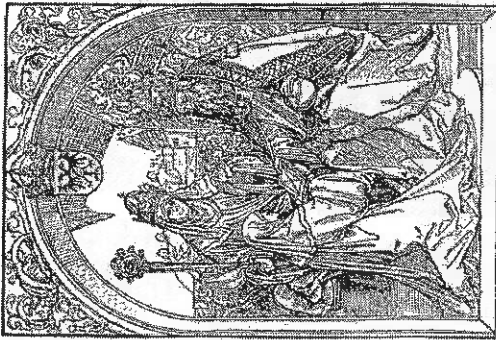
Many thanks to the King's College London History Department, especially for funding the production and reception. Also we'd like to thank Jacqueline Glomski, Anne Duggan, Celine Diggan for sewing the costumes, Sophie Ambler and the King's College London Dean's Office for use of the Chapel.

DULL CUT LIPS

BY

HROTSVITHA OF GANDERSHEIM

King's College London
Beginners and Advanced Latin classes
Medieval History MA
Dramatised Reading
King's College Chapel
7.30pm, reception to follow



Hrotsvitha presents a copy of her play to the emperor.

Hrotsvitha was a tenth-century nun in Ottonian Germany at the powerful imperial convent of Gandersheim. The convent had close connections with the imperial court through the male relations of the canonesses and nuns, linking it to the Ottonian renaissance.

Hrotsvitha's plays make her important as not only the first Christian author but also as a female author. Her plays are a response to Terrance's works, which were well known, and possibly performed, at the Ottonian court. Debate over the performance of her work has shifted in line with conceptions of women's capability, much in the way that it has now been accepted that a woman could have written Heloise's letters. Hrotsvitha wrote a cycle of complementary plays and poems. Dulcitius and its partner are unusual for their farcical elements.

The production has tried to incorporate some of the possibilities of contemporary performance. Even as a rehearsed reading incorporating movement and expression, tonight's presentation is at the most advanced level proposed for contemporary performance. Music and lighting have been kept minimal as have costumes, which are intended to look like ecclesiastical garments that have been adapted for the occasion (although this is not to doubt that had any play been performed fully at the Ottonian court the importance of complicated ritual would have allowed for ornate costume). Staging similarly has been kept basic, making use of the Chapel's space to parallel what might have been the contemporary venue. King's College's Chapel was designed to look like a third-century Roman basilica, an apt setting for both the play's setting in Diocletian's Empire and for Hrotsvitha's own time, that of the Ottonian Empire, which was recasting the Roman Empire in the model of a Christian one.

The texts used in the performance are from *Hrotsvit: opera omnia*, edited by W. Berschin (Monachii, 2001) and *The plays of Roswitha*, translated by C. St. John with an introduction by Cardinal Gasquet and a critical preface by the translator (London, 1923).

Scene One: Diocletian confronts the virgins, demanding that they submit to marriage and give up their faith. On their refusal to marry and rejection of paganism they are handed to Governor Dulcitius for examination.

Scene Two: Dulcitius meets the girls and is entranced by their beauty. He makes plans to enter their prison.

Scene Three: Dulcitius waits to enter their prison.

Scene Four: Dulcitius enters the girls' prison but hallucinates and an amusing case of mistaken identity ensues.

Scene Five: Dulcitius emerges from the girls' prison and is unrecognisable.

Scene Six: Dulcitius tries to see the Emperor.

Scene Seven: Dulcitius meets his wife and plans his revenge on the girls.

Scene Eight: The soldiers find it impossible to carry out Dulcitius' orders.

Scene Nine: The Emperor decides to hand over the girls to Count Sisinnius for punishment.

Scene Ten: Sisinnius orders the girls to be brought before him.

Scene Eleven: Agape and Chionta are brought before Sisinnius, before a miracle occurs that shocks Sisinnius.

Scene Twelve: Hirena is brought before Sisinnius after her sisters' martyrdom and the soldiers are ordered to take her away.

Scene Thirteen: The soldiers return with some unexpected news for Sisinnius, who returns with the soldiers to search for Hirena.

Scene Fourteen: Sisinnius and the soldiers finally find Hirena, who triumphs.

Words to listen for in Latin

Insanit – insane

Idolis – idols

Deos – God

Contemptum – they have contempt for

Hymnis – hymns

Ridiculum – ridiculous

Monstrum – monster

Miraculum – miracle

Sacrificate – sacrifice

Montis – mountain

Damnaberis – you will be damned