Repetory Discussed:

Ex. 6.1 Claudio Monteverdi, *L’incredazione di Poppea*: Act I, scene 3
Ex. 6.2 Claudio Monteverdi, *L’incredazione di Poppea*: Act II, scene 3
Ex. 6.3 Claudio Monteverdi, *L’incredazione di Poppea*: Act III, scene 8
Ex. 6.4 Francesco Cavalli, *Giasone*: Act I, scene 2
Ex. 6.5 Francesco Cavalli, *Giasone*: Act I, scene 14

General
- Opera spreads from Italian courts to the public theaters of Venice and then spreads throughout the Italian peninsula and opera
- Emphasis on visual spectacle
- Special circumstances of Venice influence the nature of public operas

Opera and the Venetian Republic
- System of governance shapes characteristics of Venetian musical theater
  - Republican form of government – oligarchy with an elected ruler with symbolic power- no court.
  - Reputation of city as tourist destination because of her unique beauty and the famous Carnival
  - Influence of “libertine” Venetian intellectuals, the Accademia degli Incogniti, involved in writing librettos
  - Centrality of operas a means of expressing Venetian pride in all of these elements

The Venetian Opera Industry
- First public opera performance in Venice, 1637
  - By 1660, five opera theater; by 1678, nine functioning opera theaters.
- Importance of competition
- Financial support through patrician families, owners of opera theaters, investors, noble protectors, and an impresario.
- Tickets were sold and boxes rented—profit mattered.
- Seating different levels made it possible for different classes to attend without having to mix.

The Anatomy of an Opera: Monteverdi’s *L’Incredazione di Poppea*
- Impresario: hires singers, librettist, and composer
  - Vocal casting: women used for female leads, castrati (usually) for male leads
- Librettist arranges the material into 3 acts, writes poetry that determines much of the dramatic structure
  - In this instance, first historical opera, based on Tacitus, Annals of the Roman Empire
- Composer usually follows cues from librettist regarding placement of aria and recitative; Monteverdi typically did not.
- Unusually treatment of morality and (im)morality in *L’Incredazione di Poppea*

Staging Venetian Opera
- Dance and set designs as key ingredients in visual spectacle
  - Giovanni Battista Balbi – most important choreographer of Venetian-style opera
- Stage machinery to enable rapid scene changes
  - Giovanni Torelli – most important stage designer and inventor of stage machinery
Cavalli’s *Giasone*
  - Francesco Cavalli – most important successor to Monteverdi
    - *Giasone* (1649), one of the century’s most popular operas
  - Increasing division between style of aria and recitative

Beyond *Giasone* and Venice
  - Venetian-style opera spreads to other centers, often adapted to suit local tastes

Operatic Conventions in the Late Seventeenth Century
  - Increasing complexity of plots
  - Exponential growth of brief arias
  - *Da capo* aria
  - By the end of the century, some critics saw opera as failing to live up to the goals of its creators.